

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023



LOOK!

OUR STORY OF LEARNING, CONNECTION AND IMPACT

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The Ernest Cook Trust is part of an impressive community of networks and organisations across the UK, working to help create a more environmentally engaged society. Our work is increasingly achieved through collaborations and with our funding partners, whose contribution significantly boosts the scale and reach of our work.

Together, we are making an impact. Read on and join in!



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HEADLINE ACHIEVEMENTS

Reasons to be cheerful

In this unprecedented era of nature and climate crisis, our work has never been more urgent and important.

Far from being daunted, we are continually inspired and encouraged by the young people who not only benefit from the Trust, but are increasingly involved at the core of our work. The energy and unique spirit each person brings drives us to champion the youth voice, enabling everyone to make a real and lasting difference to our changing world.

School Support



2,596

individual children worked with



563

sessions hosted at our sites from Cumbria to Dorset

100% of teachers who responded to our survey said they would recommend an Outdoor Learning site visit to their school colleagues (85 teachers were surveyed, 52% responded; in the period Sept 2022 - July 2023)

£3M

CHARITABLE SPEND* (£2.8M 2021/22)

OF WHICH

£1.9M

GRANT-FUNDING AWARDED* (£1.9M 2021/22)

903

TOTAL GRANTS AWARDED* (927: 2021/22) demonstrating a more targeted approach

42,000+

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE*

Over 42,000 children and young people benefitted from our Outdoor Learning opportunities this year (35,000+ 2021/22) **1,059 young people** experienced an Outdoor Week of Learning (OWL)*

36,088 people were engaged through <u>Green Influencers</u> <u>Scheme</u> projects across England (in the Scheme's 3-year period)



Our Green Influencers (young people aged 10-14 years) spoke at 26 conventions or conferences, and held 30 School Assemblies, amplifying the youth voice*



We have 100+ active working partnerships with organisations who share our vision for a diverse outdoors where people and places flourish



We use our 9,000 hectares of rural <u>landholdings</u> as a source of income for our charitable work, as sites for Outdoor Learning, and as centres for sustainable land management

*In the year 2022/23

Nature makes everything better!

Child on an Outdoor Week of Learning (The OWL Collaboration)



Working together and listening deeply to create the conditions for people and places to flourish



Nurturing trust and courage in ourselves and others to make trying new things possible



Making the most of the outdoors as a place where diversity can thrive The Ernest Cook Trust exists to enable disadvantaged children and young people to connect with nature. This simple aim enriches and changes lives whilst also helping to build a better, greener society.

This Report outlines the work we have delivered in the last year. The Trust is an extraordinary organisation, blessed with a deeply committed workforce, a diverse landholding with fantastic potential and a rich web of relationships with our agricultural and residential tenants, our beneficiaries and funding partners. Together, we have delivered a wide range of programmes, all focused on increasing young people's access to meaningful experiences in the natural world.

It has been a year of change with a new Chair and an interim Chief Executive. We would like to thank and pay tribute to Andrew Christie-Miller and Dr Victoria Edwards OBE for their tireless work on behalf of the Trust and their essential contribution to increasing the Trust's resolute focus on our charitable purpose of education. We are building on our predecessors' achievements by setting clear strategies for the future of our educational work, our property and business operations, by strengthening our internal organisation and developing integrated geographical hubs. We are delighted to welcome our new Chief Executive, Ed Ikin, who will lead the Trust forward from December 2023.

Our generous partners have been pivotal to increasing our impact. The success of the Green Influencers Scheme which saw over 7,000 young people engage in green community activities could not have been achieved without our funding partners at the #iwill Fund. We look forward to the next phase as we roll out the Blue Influencers Scheme in the coming months.



Looking ahead, we are determined to do more to meet the challenges of the nature and climate crisis. We will continue engaging with young people, including in leadership roles, to support their positive response to this defining issue of our era, and we will do more to drive and facilitate progressive stewardship of the land that we own and the properties we manage.

Finally, we want to give our heartfelt personal thanks to our growing <u>staff team</u>, without whose energy and enthusiasm none of this would be possible. Together, we cherish the freedom to try new opportunities to achieve our vision for an environmentally engaged societu.



Mary Riall Chair



Dr Ian Gambles Interim Chief Executive (November 2022 -December 2023)





We are inspiring more young people to achieve better life outcomes.

As one of the UK's foremost funders and providers of Outdoor Learning, The Ernest Cook Trust continues its decades-long commitment to helping children and young people, their families and communities forge lasting connections with nature.

Being outdoors makes me grateful that I am in this world and it makes me realise that nature is amazing!

We fund others



GRANT SUPPORT

We fund and run our own programmes



DIRECT DELIVERY

We work to maximise impacts and promote better outcomes



RESEARCH & ADVOCACY

CHARITABLE ACTIVITY

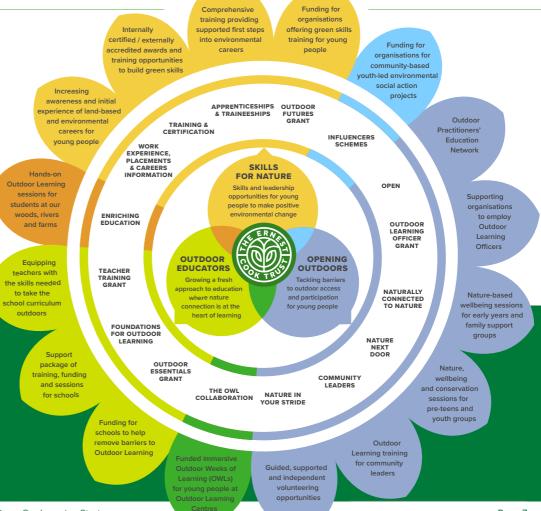
Our Learning Strategy

As key players in the Learning from the Land sector, we have comprehensively reviewed all of our programmes to ensure we make the best use of our considerable landholdings, maximise the impact of our work, and remain true to our charitable object, which is education.

What has emerged is an ambitious new Learning Strategy which will guide our future partnerships, grant giving and direct delivery.

Programmes sit across three strategic themes:

OUTDOOR EDUCATORS
OPENING OUTDOORS
SKILLS FOR NATURE



CHARITABI F ACTIVITY

Our Approach

We translate our comprehensive new Learning Strategy into the work of the Trust, using the following approach:

Communities of support

We are building communities of support around young people; listening to their needs, equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed to make meaningful connections with nature so they can pursue fulfilling land-based careers, while helping to address a prevailing tide of eco-anxiety.

Overcoming barriers

Many young people experience barriers to participation in the outdoors. By sharing our landscapes, funding and experience we are creating opportunities for high quality Outdoor Learning through formal, informal and non-formal education routes.

Empowering young lives

Ultimately, we want every young person to feel empowered to make positive changes in their own lives, their communities, and for the planet.

It takes a village

The ambitions embodied within our Learning Strategy will be fully realised through cultivating connections with likeminded organisations, shared learning, 'funding plus' and with careful research and evaluation to maximise the impact of our collective efforts.

Ambitions for Charitable Spend



2022/23 (actual)



2029 (planned - including co-funding)



Together, we inspire a love and understanding of the natural world, future farming and sustainability, creating a diverse outdoors where people and places flourish

A Geographical Focus

Highly networked regions

We're developing our focus areas into highly networked regions, with excellent opportunities for referrals between organisations, shared learning and peer support, joint funding bids and use of resources. We will use these regions as case studies of high-quality projects which demonstrate the benefits of outdoor and land-based learning, using these to inspire and influence policy and decision makers.

This work will start with research and consultation to identify the need in each area, developing an understanding of the communities and schools where children and young people are disconnected from nature and how they might benefit from our work. Our aim is to:

- » identify gaps
- » support other organisations
- » develop innovative new programmes

We are excited to be starting one such programme in our Cumbria/ Lancashire hub this year: Connecting People and Nature (CPAN), a 3-year National Lottery Heritage Fund funded programme in partnership with the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Read our **Press Release** about this collaboration.

The Forest of
Bowland is not just
stunning landscapes,
it is about the people
who live, work and
visit the area and
those who live
nearby. This project
seeks to enable
a wider range of
people to benefit
from the wellbeing
that nature brings.

Emily Crawley, Head of Learning Strategy & Delivery, The Ernest Cook Trust, talking about the CPAN programme





A significant element of the new Learning Strategy is a decision to focus our resources on specific areas, to ensure that we can develop meaningful, place-based programmes with a range of support available through our direct delivery, partnerships and grant funding.

Initially, we will focus this 'geographical hub' approach in Gloucestershire, and Cumbria/Lancashire, with Leicestershire becoming the third hub in the future.



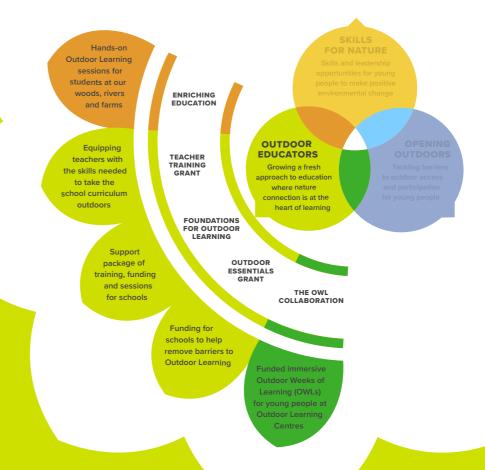




www.forestofbowland.com/connecting-people-nature

OUTDOOR EDUCATORS

Growing a fresh approach to education where nature connection is at the heart of learning



Nature Connection and Learning

The Ernest Cook Trust advocates for a school system where nature connection is at the heart of learning. Our work to support schools with the training, mentoring and funding needed will be key to helping teachers give their pupils an education centred around nature and time spent outdoors.

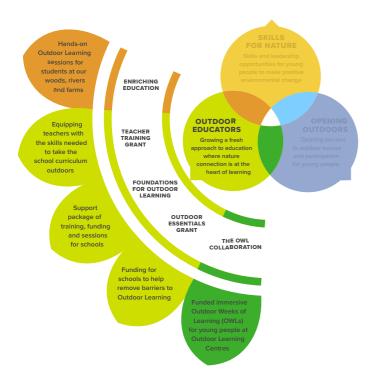
We achieve this by:

- » focusing on schools and colleges with high levels of deprivation in their surrounding communities, both urban and rural
- » providing universal access to opportunities for young people to connect with and learn about nature, farming and sustainability
- » using Outdoor Learning to help build resilient, compassionate, eco-literate learners
- » helping to create formal learning settings fit for the future

The Trust's long history of supporting <u>schools</u> has given us insight into the barriers faced by schools in learning outdoors, and the necessity of the work within this bold Outdoor Educators theme.



OUTDOOR FDUCATORS



71%

individual sessions

During academic year 2022-23 we worked with 2,596 individual children. through **563 sessions** at our sites from Cumbria to Dorset Sessions included woodland, river, farm and workshop visits, with 20% (512 children) visiting five times or more during the academic year and a further 498 children having visited us twice in the year.

of sessions for 'additional needs' schools

Our support of schools is and community deprivation levels. 71% of sessions were provided for children against these criteria while a further 16% of sessions were provided for children needs from lower scoring settings. We were also able to provide Outdoor Learning opportunities for children in schools on the doorstep of our 100%

of teachers recommend our site visits

100% of teachers who responded to our survey said they would recommend an Outdoor Learning site visit to their school colleagues (85 teachers were surveyed, 53% responded, in the period Sept 2022 - July 2023).



We delivered sessions for Childcare students in Gloucestershire and ran our first <u>Teacher Training Conference</u>, with 70 attendees from Lancashire schools who had participated in our programmes through the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership.

I am going to ensure we have a weekly slot to continue our Outdoor Learning as it was quite amazing how well they treated each other, and how much more willing they were to learn when the session was outdoors and very practical.

Teacher, woodland session

When we cover animals and plants, I usually cover so many different types of exotic animals. It makes much more sense to teach them about our local wildlife and then I can do this in more depth.

Teacher, woodland session

There is a little girl in my class who is really shy. She usually takes a little while to find her confidence to talk and put her hand up. This really was her moment to shine. She was so enthusiastic, putting her hand up and joining in all sessions. It was so lovely to see her find her voice and show how knowledgeable she is. The environment and leaders obviously made her feel comfortable enough to do this. Thank you.

Teacher, woodland session

Today I learnt that barriers shouldn't stop us from getting outside at school. I need to use organisations, grants, and experts to help us.

Teacher Training
Conference participant



The OWL Collaboration

We believe every child should experience an immersive week in nature – as a rite of passage, rather than a journey for the fortunate few

We are proud of the progress <u>The OWL Collaboration</u> has made this year to provide transformational experiences in nature for children and young people. Building on the success of its first year, more young people have participated in an Outdoor Week of Learning (OWL), more schools have developed their Outdoor Learning provisions and we have partnered with more Outdoor Learning Centres.

We are excited about our evaluation outcomes which tell us that an Outdoor Week of Learning can develop a sense of belonging in the natural world and a desire to care for it; that it can give a young person feelings of joy, peace and success; and that when they are learning outdoors, young people can shine.





Our OWL Theory of Change



The OWL Collaboration

Bringing together Outdoor Learning Centres, targeted schools and funders, this Collaboration enables the sharing of best practice and training opportunities, as well as the development of shared resources and joint evaluation tools to collectively measure the programme's success across four fields of impact:

























The OWL Collaboration - Impact on young people



1,059

(2021/22: 830) young people have <u>put on their wellies</u> to embrace new challenges on an Outdoor Week of Learning Pupil surveys
revealed that
following their OWL
residential, pupils
felt closer to nature
and had increased
care and concern for
the environment
Teacher surveys
revealed that 88% of
pupils want to spend

more time outside



We continue to remove barriers and reach those who might benefit most

49%

of participants were in receipt of Free School Meals

34%

had Special Educational Needs

20%

had English as their Second Language I felt proud for not giving up when it was cold.

The key moments were when we were helping each other.

It's the best thing
I've ever done
because I've been
out in nature, and
I haven't really
been angry.

The OWL Collaboration Impact on schools



55

(2021/22: 36) schools with high levels of need have put on their waterproofs, left the classroom and joined their pupils on an Outdoor Learning adventure

We have:

- » enabled 32 schools to access transport grants totalling £32,954
- » produced a Schools Training Directory and awarded Training Grants of £11,121 to help teachers develop their Outdoor Learning expertise
- » enabled 54 schools to access curriculum resources through annual membership of the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom

I have seen a student who has barely spoken in class for three months, suddenly take charge and order a group of 10 around the garden about what they need to do.

I've seen every single child grow and develop as a person who will have a positive impact on their community.

The visit has changed the senior leadership team's view of Outdoor Learning, leading to a new school garden, forest school training and a litter picking and recycling initiative ground the school.

The OWL Collaboration - Impact on Outdoor Learning partners



10

(2021/22: 7) Outdoor Learning partners have come together to share best practice, transfer knowledge and foster mutual support

Together we have:

- » identified common practice using the 5 Pathways to Nature Connection framework developed by The University of Derby
- » created shared resources to evolve the programme in an accessible and inclusive way
- » developed our evaluative storytelling skills
- » broadened expertise through joint training and Network-wide visits
- » shared information on recruitment practice, booking systems, insurance and quality badges

It is great to be part of this network as it has the potential to demonstrate to the industry the benefits of and best practice in Outdoor Learning. Exciting times!

I believe there has been a shift [from] us being competitors to us being one collaborative team, reaching for the same goals, which in turn has created a hugely positive and collaborative network.



The OWL Collaboration - Storytelling

We know that stories entice and inspire, change hearts and convince minds. The stories we have created this year are helping us promote our strategic aim - that every child should experience an immersive week in nature as a rite of passage.

Change makers

With a growing body of evidence, and exciting plans to evolve our storytelling, we are working with stakeholders to convince policymakers that every child deserves their own Outdoor Week of Learning.



We invite you to watch our Strategic Story Video to witness how an OWL has helped young people on a journey towards nature connection.

THE DULVERTON TRUST

We are grateful to the Dulverton Trust who support The OWL Collaboration and provide funding for Outdoor Weeks of Learning. To ensure the long-term strategic success of the programme, we are seeking new funding partners to join us. If you believe, as we do, that every child should experience an immersive week in nature, please contact us to start the conversation.

JOIN US!

Outdoor Essentials Grants

Outdoor Essentials is a small Grant that goes a long way

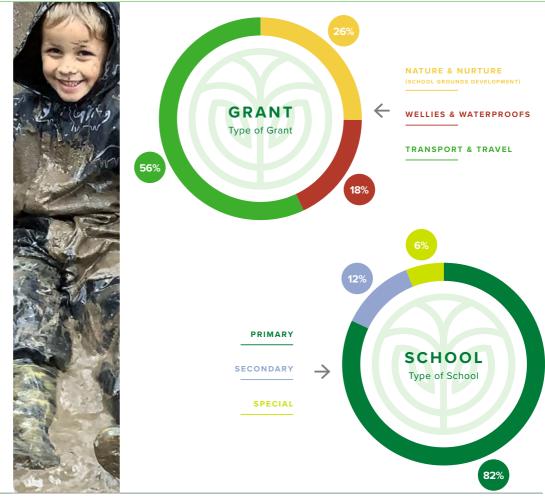
The <u>Grant</u> is a £500 award to UK state-funded Primary, Secondary and Special Schools to enable them to get their pupils learning outdoors.

Since it was launched in 2019, 1,814 Grants have been awarded to schools, reaching 340,836 young people.

This year (2022-23), we issued 504 Grants.

2022 was the Trust's 70th year, an anniversary we shared with Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. The Trust linked the Outdoor Essentials Grant with The Queen's Green Canopy, created to mark Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee. Run by The Woodland Trust, this unique planting initiative encouraged schools to apply for a free tree to plant in their local area.

192 schools applied for the Outdoor Essentials Grant with a pledge to plant a tree.



Outdoor Essentials Grants

Giving schools a choice of how to spend the Grant has allowed them to address their particular barriers to accessing nature in the way that is most effective for them.

As a result of this Grant, children have been enabled to:

Go out in weather and at times of year when they would not otherwise have done

Engage positively with school when they usually find it emotionally challenging

Experience places they would not otherwise be able to

The most valuable outcome was enabling children to experience a day at the beach, many of whom had never been to beach or seen the sea before.

We have one particular student who struggles with anger in school who has transformed due to having five lessons a fortnight outdoors.

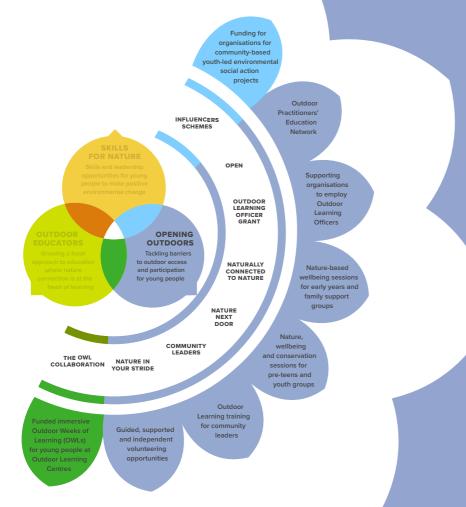
They are now more likely to take their learning outside of school and share it with their families as they are so passionate about it.

One boy who can be extremely shy within the classroom became very vocal and engaged in den building and seemed to build in confidence that is now having an impact on his grades within school.

Teachers report the development not only of their grounds but also of their teaching approaches, with some schools even taking on a whole school approach to getting outside.

We have now incorporated the planting schedule into our curriculum planning.





OPENING OUTDOORS

Tackling barriers to outdoor access and participation for young people

We want every child and young person to feel able to connect with nature

Opening Outdoors is all about tackling the barriers that make the outdoors inaccessible to many young people, including young people with mental health difficulties, neurodiversity, minoritised ethnic groups and lower income backgrounds. We work with young people in small groups, providing long-term support and non-formal learning opportunities to enable them to engage with nature and thrive outdoors.

Cultivating Connections

Working with youth-based organisations and professionals, we help create communities of support around children and young people, building a sense that nature can and should be relevant and available to everyone, so that all may benefit from the wellbeing improvements that nature connection provides.

Not only do we open up outdoor spaces for young people who are facing significant barriers to inclusion, we also provide training and funding for others to do the same, building capacity and skills for Outdoor Learning in communities.







OPENING OUTDOORS

As skilled and experienced Outdoor Learning providers within community settings, we have been able to grow our Opening Outdoors theme. From our relatively new community engagement programmes, we have cultivated stronger connections with local community groups together with regional and national networks.

We have achieved this through:

Consultation

8 events for community leaders to share their knowledge of barriers to access, and explore ways the Trust could help reduce and remove these.

Co-creation

Working with VICTA UK (supporting blind and partially sighted children) to create online resources encouraging nature connection and wellbeing through accessible gardening activities.

Contribution

Actively contributing to county and regional programmes (such as the Gloucestershire and West of England Local Nature Partnerships, Exeter University Green Social Prescribing research and Barnwood Trust's Access to Nature programme) to tackle inequity of access to nature.

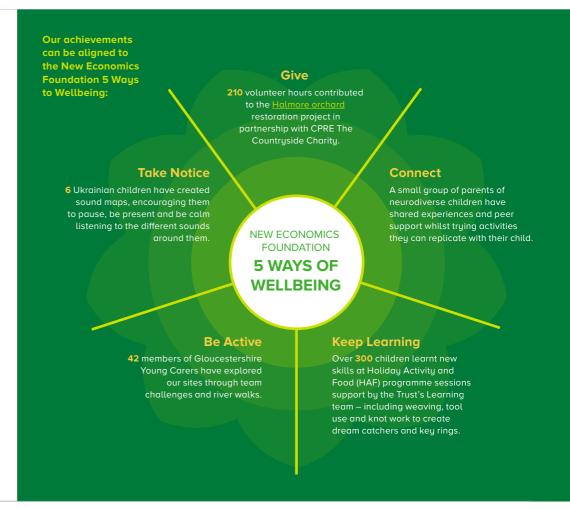






OPENING OUTDOORS

Inequity of access to the outdoors isn't restricted to physical barriers. For some, a lack of confidence, resilience and self-esteem (the basic building blocks of wellbeing) make it harder to remove barriers. Using a range of nature-based interventions, we offer bespoke programmes to respond to these needs and enable participants to connect with nature in a safe, welcoming and supportive environment.



Naturally Connected to Nature - Little Saplings



321

Participants

(98 adults and 223 children) have attended the Forest School ethos-led sessions Our ever-popular outdoor toddler group, Little Saplings, restarted in May as part of the National Lottery Heritage Fund funded 'Connecting People and Nature' (CPAN) project, in partnership with the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Using a new delivery methodology allowed those families who are new to the outdoors to slowly build confidence and knowledge to take part in child-led outdoor play. A 'Four Steps to Nature' approach with support from local partners in Lancashire also allowed engagement with harder to reach families.



Everyone should come to these sessions, we feel so well supported. I like how there are a mixture of freestyle elements and activities [which are led], allowing me and my little one to pick and choose to suit his mood.

Everything is already very good and accessible and this is only our first session.

Grandparent

Outdoor Learning Officer Grants & OPEN

Supporting organisations to employ Outdoor Learning Officers

The Trust awarded a further 10 Outdoor Learning Officer Grants in 2022 bringing the total of Outdoor Learning Officers supported in their role across the UK to 30, representing £816K of funds directed to host organisations for this grant stream over the three years to April 2023.

Read this <u>Press Release</u> about our Spring 2023 Outdoor Learning Officer Grant recipients.

Take a look at our **map** to see where these grants are making a difference.

All funded Outdoor Learning Officers were invited to join OPEN (Outdoor Practitioners Education Network), run by The Ernest Cook Trust to share best practice, exchange ideas and skills, and encourage CPD. They were also invited to join our growing community of environmental youth social action leaders at the annual Green Influencers Scheme Conference.

Join Us!

If you would like to support the funding of inspirational role models who help young people form lasting connections with the natural environment, please talk to us about becoming a partner.



This year's applications were awarded to charities and non-profit organisations within two defined geographical areas, with awards of up to £15,000 per year, for three years made to:

Cumbria/Lancashire hub

- Eden Rivers Project
- Groundwork Greater Manchester
- Morecambe Bay Partnership
- Ribble Rivers Trust
- Susan's Farm
- The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire,
 Manchester & North Merseyside

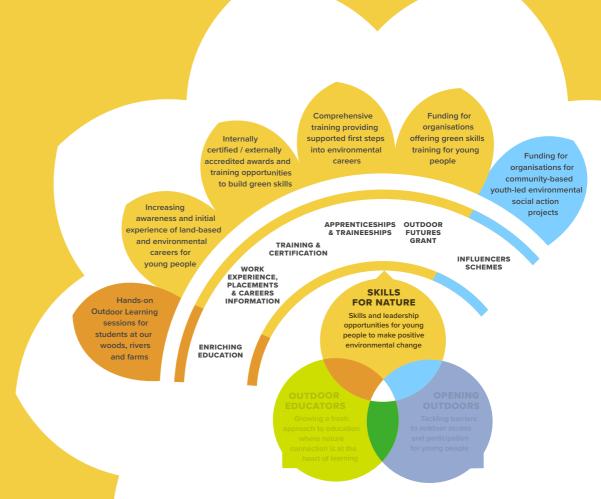
Gloucestershire hub

- Creative Sustainability
- Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust
- The Friendship Cafe
- Young Gloucestershire



SKILLS FOR NATURE

Skills and leadership opportunities for young people to make positive environmental change



SKILLS FOR NATURE

Skills and leadership opportunities for young people to make positive environmental change

Building on our previous success with the Kickstart Scheme in Cumbria, and recognising that our landholding and partnerships represent significant training opportunities, our new Skills for Nature theme will focus on developing skills pathways and leadership opportunities.

Green Skills Pathways

We want to empower young people to make positive changes in their own lives, their communities and for the planet. With this aim, our programmes will work to create green skills pathways, offering practical ways young people can contribute to environmental improvement and building skills and positivity about the future, while gaining

a sense of agency and improved wellbeing in the process.

Our support will particularly focus on young people facing additional barriers to participation, including urban and rural deprivation, low-income backgrounds, additional needs and minoritised ethnic groups.

We are addressing skills shortages in the land-based sectors (eg forestry, ecology, agriculture) through a range of training opportunities that will help young people gain the qualifications needed to access these roles, increasing their employability. Helping to build the future workforce is an essential part of achieving our environmental goals.



Training & Certification

Opportunities for young people who thrive outside the classroom

We continue to develop a range of opportunities for young people. In 2022/23 these included:

- Working with the Lake District National Park Authority and the Oaklea Trust to provide five training placements at the National Park's Brockhole site, resulting in the young people involved gaining Open Awards in Introductory Conservation Skills.
- Working with Ullswater Community College to provide approximately 60 farm days for BTEC Agriculture and BTEC Animal Care students at our own Low Beckside Farm in Cumbria.
- Delivery of 28 in-house skills-based awards, through our Workshop programme designed for young people with additional needs and those not thriving in the traditional classroom environment. These included six of our new **Blacksmithing Awards**, delivered in partnership with Hereford College of Arts, organised in conjunction with Fresh Air Sculpture.

Watch BBC Points West coverage of this course.

- » An opportunity for students participating in our Workshop programme to exhibit their work at a fringe event associated with the prestigious Fresh Air Sculpture exhibition in Gloucestershire.
- » Providing 4 in-house Work Experience placements for students to try a range of land-based and environmental education roles.



Never thought in a million years I'd be able to do something like that ... I love dirty hands now!

Student on the Blacksmithing course

SKILLS FOR NATURE

Outdoor Futures Grant

The Trust awarded Outdoor Futures Grants to the following organisations in 2022/23:

- **Small Woods Association** National Coppice Apprentice
- **Bore Place** Learning from the Land Internship
- **QEST (Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust)** Master Thatcher Apprentice
- FarmEd Bursaries to attend the Emergent Generation 2022 gathering







per year for three years to support apprenticeship and training schemes:

- **National Hedgelaying Society**
- **Dry Stone Walling Association**



made possible

through our **Platinum Jubilee**

Award.



SKILLS FOR NATURE & OPENING OUTDOORS

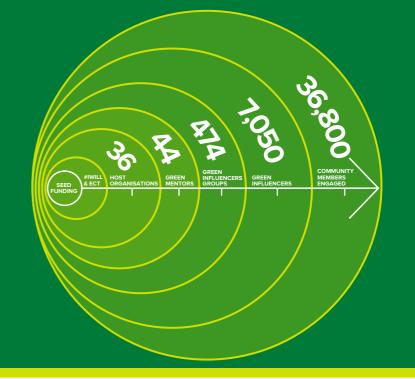
Green Influencers Scheme

A £3M youth-led project aimed at 10-14 year-olds. Our youth-led Influencers Schemes help young people find their voice, positively impact the environment and benefit their communities through unique youth social action projects.

The Green Influencers Scheme delivery phase ended in July 2023.

Over three years, the Scheme successfully supported:





36

Host Organisations

across England

44

Green Mentors

employed by Host Organisations 474

Green Influencers Groups

established across England 7,050

Green Influencers

from schools and youth groups leading environmental youth social action (exceeding the 5,000+ target) 36,800

Community Members Engaged

peers, families and members of the public through school assemblies, events and Open Days (exceeding the 15,000+ target) SKILLS FOR NATURE & OPENING OUTDOORS

Green Influencers Scheme - Evaluation

Look out for the final Impact Report for this Scheme from external evaluators Wavehill on our website.



Green Influencers told us:

It's made me feel really good about the environment, and I love helping it, it's made me feel better about that.

It's helped me identify nature more. When you understand what a tree or plant is a connection deepens.

Green Mentors said:

Thanks to the Scheme we appreciate the profound meaning of youth-led work and the power of young people's voices and creativity in raising environmental awareness.

The ripple effect and general reach of the Scheme has been much further and more successful than other funds we have been involved in delivering.

Proudly supporting youth social action











The #iwill Fund is made possible thanks to £66M joint investment from The National Lottery Community Fund and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to support young people to access high quality social action opportunities. The Ernest Cook Trust is acting as a match funder and awarding grants on behalf of the #iwill Fund.

SKILLS FOR NATURE & OPENING OUTDOORS

Green Influencers Scheme - Grants









- » In total, the Green Influencers Scheme funded 387 360° Grants of £360 and 114 Green Influencers Project Grants of between £1,000 and £5,000
- » In 2022/2023 financial year 176 360° Grants and 84 Green Influencers Project Grants were distributed

STATISTICS FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2022/2023:

» 30% of Green Influencers were from minoritised ethnic groups

Green Influencers:

- » Organised 28 community litter picks
- » Held 30 Assemblies
- » Spoke at 26 conventions or conferences
- » Held 28 community planting days
- » Organised 72 community events (fundraisers, awareness raising etc)

SKILLS

Green Influencers were surveyed and asked how the Scheme had been of benefit to them. They were asked about a range of skills they could have gained from running youth-led environmental social action projects and these were the top skills gained:

- » 64% of young people improved communication skills
- » 59% increased self- confidence/self esteem
- » 66% improved teamwork skills
- y 49% helped overcome difficulties/work through problems
- » 44% improved leadership skills

2.30 PM

SKILLS FOR NATURE & OPENING OUTDOORS

Green Influencers Scheme - Conference 2023

Bringing together Green Mentors and community workers from environmental charities and non-profit organisations, this year's youth-led <u>Conference</u> was supported by our Youth Advisory Board (young people aged 14-20 years). It hosted a variety of speakers and workshops with opportunities to share ideas, network and be inspired.

Celebrating reaching our target of 5000+ Green Influencers

- » 95 attendees, including 22 young people
- » 84% of attendees found the overall Conference very useful to their work
- >> 75% of attendees were able to apply knowledge and skills from workshops to their current work with young people





The best bits were: time to speak to colleagues, a chance to see how other organisations are progressing and a reminder (as if I needed one!) how incredible young people really can be!!

I'm so pleased to be here, to celebrate and share the learning, to take all the fantastic things you've been doing to amplify, so that we can show more funders why we should be funding youth social action.

Helen Whyman Head of #iwill Fund



SKILLS FOR NATURE & OPENING OUTDOORS

Blue Influencers Scheme

Following the successful delivery of the Green Influencers Scheme, this new Scheme, <u>launched in September 2023</u>, will fund 22 Blue Mentor posts based in Host Organisations across England. They will work with 4,000+ young people across three years, supporting groups of young people in their youth-led environmental social action projects in coastal, river and estuary communities and on 'blue' environmental issues

This £2.26M programme is match funded with the #iwill Fund and will support Host Organisations nationwide working in areas with high Multiple Deprivation Indices.

The Blue Influencers Scheme will help address the specific environmental concerns raised by young people living in coastal, river and estuary communities. Evidence suggests that despite living in proximity to the ocean, many deprived coastal communities do not feel welcome in these blue spaces or connected to their immediate environments. The Blue Influencers Scheme plans to increase:

- connection for young people and communities to blue spaces
- provision of high quality environmental youth social action opportunities
- youth-led opportunities
- improvement in wellbeing
- participation from underserved communities and improvements in Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
- understanding of blue and green skills and career opportunities for young people
 - engagement with local communities





Launching the Blue Influencers Scheme in Lancashire with local children from St Mary's RC Primary School, Morecambe



The #iwill Fund is made possible thanks to £66million joint investment from The National Lottery Community Fund and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to support young people to access high quality social action opportunities. The Ernest Cook Trust is acting as a match funder and awarding grants on behalf of the #iwill Fund













9,000

HECTACRES

across 9 estates in 6 counties



25

FARMS

best-practice, innovative land management



480+

TENANTS

dwellings, land, woodland, commercial enterprises

The Trust owns and manages over 9,000 hectares of land and property across six counties:
Cumbria, Buckinghamshire, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Leicestershire and Oxfordshire. This is mainly let farmland, with 584 hectares of woodland, houses, cottages, and a few small commercial premises.

Our vision for our whole estate is to provide growth and continuity, supporting the future of the Trust, while playing a central part in the communities we share

Over 480 tenants rent from the Trust, either year to year, or for multiple generations. We take pride in the professional management of these relationships, embracing the inevitability of change and sensitively diversifying our interests in support of the Trust's charitable object, which is education.



OUR LANDHOLDINGS

Bricks and Mortar

Land and property in rural England has seen unprecedented economic pressure from increased costs, changing onerous government legislation and high demand in the market place. In addition, post-Brexit agricultural and environmental legislation continues to be challenging.

Living in the countryside is changing, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic which brought a renewed recognition of 'value' in being able to access nature, and a growing urgency to reduce our environmental impact on the planet.

During the year, we successfully re-let nine new homes, with a return to routine rent reviews across our residential portfolio. Income from all our estates is seeing steady growth and we continue to direct significant expenditure on repairs and maintenance as part of our commitment to our rural landholding.

Our Capital Assets and Development Opportunities

While there have been no major capital sales or acquisitions during the year, we were excited to receive planning permission for the renovation of Court Farmhouse, Quenington into our new Head Office. Works are now underway. Our in-house professional team is also overseeing the building of Fiennes Court, a development of five 2 and 3-bedroom homes in Fairford, Gloucestershire, through our trading subsidiary, Mintglebe Ltd. These new homes at Fiennes Court will supplement our existing portfolio with modern property.









A trading subsidiary of The Ernest Cook Trust

OUR LANDHOLDINGS

A new high-quality low-carbon community

In October 2023 we received planning permission for 87 new homes at north east Fairford. Designed with nature in mind, the development achieved Building with Nature Design accreditation and provides more than 50% of the area as green space.

This is an opportunity to create a high-quality, low-carbon community. We want to do more than just build homes. We want to create a better place for nature, so are following Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust and the University of the West of England's national standards framework, <u>Building with Nature</u>. This seeks to protect and enhance existing and new green infrastructure features, maximising the benefits of new places for people and wildlife.

By bringing people closer to nature and building great places for us to live, work and play, this development can make a major contribution towards better health and wellbeing in our community, tackling the climate and nature emergency.

Sustainable communities

On our Slimbridge Estate, the <u>Wisloe</u> development (a new c1,500-home settlement) in the Stroud district is advancing through the local plan process, while the Southwest Aylesbury development in Buckinghamshire (c1,400 new homes) waits patiently for HS2 and the local planning circumstances to allow it to proceed.

The Trust's long history of building homes, supporting development and sensitively embracing opportunities across our landholdings remains an important part of our activities.







The Land we Manage

Around 90% of our land is farmed by farm tenants. We continue our commitment to the sensitive management of rural land and providing the support to see each farm business thrive alongside nature.

There are some exciting new land based projects that we hope to secure in the coming months, with a River Coln Catchment Management Plan taking shape in Gloucestershire, along with plans for habitat improvement across our Home Estates in partnership with our farming tenants. This exciting proposition will have tangible positive outcomes for the environment and local communities and create Outdoor Learning opportunities.

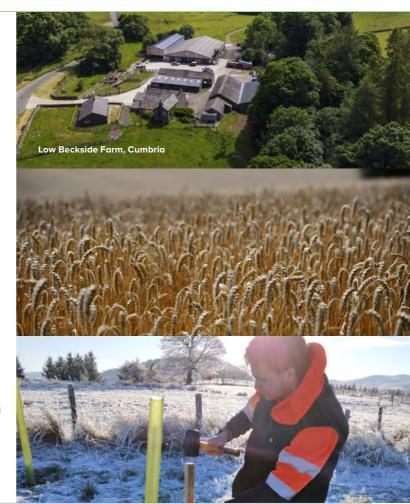
The evolution of our Learning Estate in Little Dalby continues within the development of our Leicestershire geographical hub. We are excited to see this hub develop as we explore new partnerships with landholders in the region, and continue cultivating connections in the wider educational and environmental world.

With so much opportunity in this glorious and diverse landscape, we aim to demonstrate best practice for sustainable land management, explore ways to further improve our natural capital and reduce our environmental impact, while integrating the Learning Strategy into our activities.

Our ambitious application for Higher Level Stewardship funding in Leicestershire was successful and will promote alternative land use choices and deliver habitat improvements alongside food production.

In Cumbria we have applied for a similar scheme at Low Beckside Farm to support continued investment in the natural resources we own, and provide opportunities to learn from the land and develop essential rural skills. We are developing the in-house skills to manage these new initiatives, supported by expert external advisers. Where applicable, we use our farming subsidiary ECT Farms Ltd to maximise these opportunities.

Take a look at this <u>map</u> to see our rural landholding locations.



OUR LANDHOLDING INITIATIVES

River Coln Catchment Management Plan

At the heart of the Home Estates in Gloucestershire is a 2.86 mile stretch of the River Coln and surrounding catchment which falls within the Trust's ownership. The river as a whole has had a number of pressures placed upon it from historic management and interventions to abstraction, pollution and poorly managed access. These have led to the gradual degradation of the habitat.

Through our progressive stewardship of this popular local landscape we aim to reinstate an ecologically rich habitat, creating learning and social community engagement opportunities around this unique natural resource.

Our aim is to maximise conservation, educational and recreational value while enabling the catchment to remain productive. Future management will be informed by baseline surveys and improvement monitoring.

River Coln Survey

We have undertaken our first survey of wild fish on the River Coln via electrofishing, a common scientific survey method used to determine abundance, density and species composition.

The results were a surprise, with greater numbers of grayling and brown trout than expected, with young and breeding fish present indicating that the ecosystem is supporting the growth of local wild fish populations. This is a credit to the hard work of volunteers, led by our dedicated River Keeper.



OUR LANDHOLDING INITIATIVES

Fairford Estate Habitat Management Plan

We are collaborating with farm tenants on our Fairford Estate to improve habitat and biodiversity on a landscape scale, to achieve mutually beneficial objectives. The Habitat Management Plan will assess the opportunities and develop a framework for providing a more environmentally-rich estate, while also considering the funding and resource requirements to achieve the Plan's objectives.

Lapwing Project

This year saw a great success for lapwing on one of our farms in Gloucestershire. Our Estate Ranger, spotted two pairs on an area that was going to be cultivated for maize, where the birds had been attracted to the open ground favoured for nesting. Having established that a lapwing pair was actively nesting, a collaboration between our consultant ornithologist, farm tenant, and his contractors ensured the safety of the birds during the multiple field operations necessary for the seasonal maize crop.

By the end of July, 10 pairs had nested in the land kept bare for them, with over 20 chicks successfully hatching and protected from predation. A plan is now in place to provide a safe breeding ground in years to come, by encouraging the birds into an area that will remain uncropped, and monitoring the site for breeding activity.

To have seen this red-listed bird breeding successfully in these numbers is a huge credit to all involved for their tireless active stewardship in keeping track of the birds' locations, and our farm tenant for their sensitive farming practices and appreciation of wildlife.





Financial Review

The Trust has continued to develop and extend its education and learning activities.

Expenditure on Grants and Learning activities increased to £3,013,000 (2022: £2,829,000) representing an increase of 6.5% over the previous uegr.

Trustees have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and believe the Trust's objects and aims are in alignment with the public benefit requirements of the 2011 Charities Act. The Report demonstrates the activities of the Trust and how they meet the principles defined in the Act. In particular it outlines the Trust's expenditure of £3,013,000 on education and learning in 2022/23 of which £1,866,000 was on educational grants. All our grants are assessed to ensure they deliver public benefit and charitable purpose.

Funding for these activities is derived from the Trust's estate income, external grants and its financial investments.

Performance of the estates remains relatively strong, income increased by 6% to £4,076,000 (2022: £3,835,262) in the year. The Trust continued

important estate works that saw expenditure increase to £4,564,000 (2022: £3,056,000) with the resulting contribution falling to a negative £488,000 compared with a positive contribution of £779,000 in the previous year. The reduction in contribution was largely the result of repairs costs which increased by £673,000 to £1,948,000 and support costs which increased by £252,000 year on year.

The Trust's financial investments performed less well in the year, generating an income of £1,068,000 (2022: £1,026,000) and reducing in market value by £3,188,000 in the year. The overall return from the Trust's financial investments was -4.9% for the year (2022: +8.64%), a reflection of the wider economic challenges and turbulence in financial markets. The Trust has a policy of financing its activities while preserving the long-term value of its Endowment. The Investment Managers have a mandate of achieving a return of 3% plus the increase in the Consumer Price Index over the course of an economic cycle; this is likely to be challenging for the short and medium term.

A re-assessment of Investment Property valuations has resulted in an uplift of £2,276,000 in the value of our property investments.

The Ernest Cook Trust has five significant items of expenditure:



TRUSTEES' REPORT - FINANCIAL REVIEW

Financial Review

Reserves Policy

The Trust has an Expendable Endowment and, as such, the risk of not having adequate reserves is judged by the Trustees to be low. Within this context, the Trustees ensure that the Trust holds sums equivalent to at least six months working capital, including grant commitments, in readily accessible liquid assets. The Expendable Endowment represents the Endowment of the Charity at 31 March 2023 at £208,227,000 (2022: £207,625,000).

Fundraising Policy

The Trustees are aware of their obligations under the Charities Act. We occasionally engage with statutory funders, trusts and foundations to raise income but do not engage in public fundraising or use commercial fundraisers. There have been no instances of complaints or non-compliance with any code (2022: none).

Remuneration Policy

The Trust's pay policy, pay structure and changes to employee terms and conditions are reviewed by the Remuneration Committee, which comprises the Chair and one other Trustee, and makes recommendations to the Board of Trustees. The Chairman of the Trust determines the salary and other benefit changes for the Chief Executive. The Chairman makes these decisions in consultation with the Remuneration Committee described above. The Trust's Memorandum and Articles of Association provide an authority to pay our Trustees, in accordance with the wishes of our founder. A separate Remuneration Committee of independent experts is convened periodically to review Trustee remuneration.



TRUSTEES' REPORT - FINANCIAL REVIEW

Financial Review

Future Financial Performance

The Trustees are mindful of the current pressures and challenges posed by the global economic and political situation, in particular the impacts of inflation, higher interest rates and volatile markets. Rising costs could impact the Trust's operations significantly and will be a key factor in planning future activity. Consideration of how activities will be funded remains important and our plans will be determined by maintaining an appropriate balance between income and expenditure, as well as continuing to exercise careful management of our assets.

Investments

The Trust's charitable activities are funded from external grants and donations, returns from its investment portfolio and income from the estates. The Trust's finance and investment policies are intended to provide long-term stability and liquidity sufficient for the financing of the Trust's charitable activities while maintaining the real value of the endowment.

The Trust's investment policy is reviewed annually and establishes the long-term investment objective, risk profile, strategic asset allocation and investment restrictions. It also encompasses our policies on Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG). The policy reflects a total return objective that considers all sources of return and means that both income from the portfolio and the underlying capital can be used to support charitable activities. The Trustees have now established a policy in relation to socially responsible investment and sustainability for the Trust in the context of its aims and objectives.

The Trust expects its Investment Managers to follow this policy when making investment decisions, and to report on how ESG considerations have been applied in the selection and management of investments.



Financial Review

Risk

The Trustees are responsible for the oversight of the risks faced by the Trust.

We review our risk regularly through the Leadership team, our committees and our full Board of Trustees, using a Risk Register that identifies the risk, the potential severity of its impact and its likelihood of occurrence.

Risk Management is scrutinised by the Audit, Finance & Investment Committee, which reviews the Trust's risk position, internal controls, compliance with relevant statutory and finance regulations, and the work of our external auditors. Risks are mitigated by ensuring internal policies are reviewed regularly; ensuring adequate reporting procedures, from operational to board level; providing relevant training across the organisation; taking appropriate and timely professional advice; making sure that the Trust is appropriately insured against risks.

Principal Risks & Uncertainties

Financial The Trust's financial position is inevitably exposed to risk from the wider economy and global financial and political trends. Having performed well in the previous year, the investment portfolio performed poorly in 2022/23, achieving a net return of minus 4.9% for the year.

Potential demand for our charitable activities continues to outstrip our ability to resource our work. We are planning ways to enhance future income, including long-term development of our investment assets to produce higher yields and enable increases in our charitable work. The challenging economic climate continues to have an adverse impact on the Trust's investments and operating costs, however the Trustees remain confident of the long-term resilience of our finances.

Cyber Crime In common with all charities, we remain acutely aware of the risks associated with increased cyber crime. Staff are regularly

reminded of the risk and specific nature of the crimes as they develop. We have a 'risk aware' culture in the organisation, which is crucial in reducing this risk.

Health & Safety in Estates and Learning Activities

There is risk associated with children and young people learning outdoors and with managing large, landed estates. We manage this risk with up-to-date Health & Safety procedures and risk assessments for all activities, high levels of staff awareness and training, and third-party assessments and advice.

Child Protection and Safeguarding Trustees are aware of the safeguarding issues associated with working with children and young people. All Trustees and staff undertake regular safeguarding training and our Senior Safeguarding Lead, Trustee Simon Eliot, works with our Designated Safeguarding Lead, Emily Crawley, to ensure that our policy is up to date and consistently upheld.

Financial Review

Principal Risks & Uncertainties (continued)

Staff Performance and Retention We are aware that the COVID-19 pandemic has taken its toll on the work and home lives of the nation and recognise that this could prove a threat to staff performance and retention. Staff continue to work hard to maintain the Trust's growth in activities while coping with variable working conditions. We continue to mitigate this risk by paying careful attention to staff wellbeing, encouraging more home/hybrid working for many roles, maintaining close communication and providing support to one another. We continue to monitor staff performance and wellbeing.

Cost of Living Crisis In common with many other charities, the Trust faces notable challenges posed

by economic conditions impacting stakeholders because of an increased cost of living. The Trust is conscious of the economic impact of inflation on grant recipients and families who face increased challenges in participating in projects and programmes as well as a reduction in funding for projects from elsewhere. The Trust can adapt and support its activities as circumstances require. Equally, the impact is felt by the Trust itself and its staff. We monitor our costs carefully and took exceptional steps in 2022-23 to support staff to cope with increases in the cost of living.

Operational Risk This is mitigated through the regular review of activities and the use of professional advisers. In our partnership work, we specifically mitigate risk by conducting thorough due diligence of any potential partners, and drafting written partnership agreements. Governance We are aware of the importance of good oversight of the Trust's assets, management and charitable activities by the Board of Trustees. Our Trustee engagement remains at a high level, we plan Trustee succession to ensure that the right mix of skills, experience and expertise is maintained. The Board of Trustees appoints specific committees dealing with Property; Learning; Audit, Finance & Investment that each meet regularly. Trustees receive accounts, minutes of all committees and a regular report from the Chief Executive. A transparent culture and culture of open communication with the executive helps Trustees maintain a thorough and up-to-date oversight of the organisation.

Structure, Governance & Management

The Ernest Cook Trust was founded and endowed in 1952 by the late Ernest Edward Cook as an educational charity. The 1952 Deed of Trust was added to and amended in 1984, 1995 and 2006. The Trust was incorporated in 2012. The Directors of the Trust are also its Trustees for the purposes of charity law. Our Head Office is based on our Fairford Estate in Gloucestershire. The Trust is a charity registered in England and Wales, number 1146629

There are currently six Trustees (November 2023). Trustees are appointed for a five-year term and may serve a maximum of three terms.

New Trustees are provided with an induction programme and individual Trustee evaluations are conducted annually by the Chairman. Training of Trustees is reviewed against individual training needs. The Trustees are paid under the terms of the Articles of Association to recognise the professional work they undertake on behalf of the Trust, over and above that normally expected of a charity Trustee.

During 2022/23 Dr Ian Gambles, Sir Bertie Ross and Andrew Christie-Miller all stood down as Trustees and Ian Pigott joined the Board of Trustees. In June 2023 Rory Landman joined the Board of Trustees. The Trust's financial year runs from 1 April to 31 March and meetings of the full Trustee Board are held quarterly. The Trustees have appointed three Trustee-led committees to monitor specialist areas of activity: Property; Audit, Finance & Investment; and Learning. Additionally, a Remuneration Committee of Trustees is convened on an ad hoc basis when required.

Each committee has its own terms of reference, is chaired by a Trustee and reports back to the main Board. Matters requiring a decision by the Trustees are referred to them either at one of their meetings or by correspondence in between such meetings. The Trust is run on a day-to-day basis by the Chief Executive, assisted by a team of staff, including a Property Director, a Director of Finance & Technical Services, Head of Learning Strategy & Delivery, Head of Grants & Partnerships, and Chief of Staff.



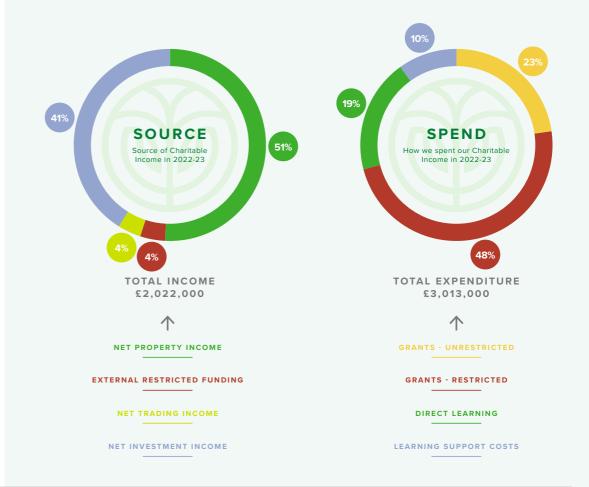
Financial Statement

The Ernest Cook Trust is one of the UK's foremost funders and providers of Outdoor Learning for disadvantaged children and young people. We care for 9,000 hectares of land across six counties from Cumbria to Dorset, which serves as both an asset and an Outdoor Learning resource.

Surplus income from our estates, together with returns on our investment portfolio, fund our charitable work. This is augmented by grant funding from the public and third sector. By strategically curating our funds and collaborations in this way, we increase the scale, impact and influence of our work.

Our full Annual Report & Accounts can be found on the Charity Commission website.

The source of funds and the components of our charitable spend are shown opposite.



LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

The Ernest Cook Trust Legal and Administrative details for the year ended 31 March 2023

Registered Company No. 07907411

Registered Charity No. 1146629

Registered Office and principal address:

THE ESTATE OFFICE FAIRFORD PARK FAIRFORD GLOUCESTERSHIRE GL7 4JH

Trustees

Andrew W M Christie-Miller Chairman (until 31 March 2023)

Mary E Riall

(appointed Chair 31 March 2023)

Simon F Eliot

Dr Ian Gambles FCMA (July - November 2022)

Jenefer D Greenwood OBE

Harry M Henderson DL

Ian Pigott OBE DL (appointed September 2022)

Sir Bertie Ross KCVO (until December 2022)

Leadership Team

Dr Victoria M Edwards OBE FRICS FAAV

Chief Executive

Dr Ian Gambles FCMAInterim Chief Executive

Michael A Birnie MRICS FAAV

Property Director

Emily M E Crawley

Head of Learning Strategy & Delivery

Steve Hatcher FCA

Director of Finance & Technical Services and Company Secretary

Suzie R Paton

Head of Grants & Partnerships

Sara B Rostant Chief of Staff

Committee Chairs

Audit, Finance & Investment

Harry M Henderson DL

Property

Jenefer D Greenwood OBE

Learning

Simon F Eliot

Advisers

Banker

National Westminster Bank plc 32 Market Place Cirencester Gloucestershire GL7 2NU

Solicitors

Charles Russell Speechlys LLP Compass House Lypiatt Road Cheltenham Gloucestershire GL50 2QJ

Auditor

Price Bailey LLP 3rd Floor, 24 Old Bond Street London W1S 4AP

Investment Adviser

Cazenove Capital Management 1, London Wall Place London EC2Y 5AU





A Remarkable Legacy

The achievements and ambitions documented in this Report owe much to the leadership of our departing Chief Executive, Dr Victoria Edwards.

Victoria's influence has been integral to our growth. She has helped join our charitable purpose with our land ownership, securing the future of our estates by overseeing an extensive modernisation programme and revised strategy. She focused our charitable work on providing Outdoor Learning opportunities for underserved young people, such that many thousands of young lives have benefited as a direct result of her enthusiasm, tenacity, hard work and vision.

The Ernest Cook Trust extended family thanks Victoria for her outstanding leadership, commitment and expertise and wishes her the very best in the future. She leaves a remarkable legacy.



I will always hold enormous affection for the Trust, its beneficiaries, and partners. Most of all, I will miss my extraordinary team of dedicated colleagues, but I am confident that they will nurture what we have built and ensure that the Trust continues to flourish.

Dr Victoria Edwards OBE, Chief Executive 2016 - 2023 (Trustee 2007 - 2016)





Fairford Park, Fairford, Gloucestershire GL7 4JH
Tel 01285 712492 Email hello@ernestcooktrust.org.uk Web www.ernestcooktrust.org.uk

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