



Annual Report

For the year ending 31 March 2025

Contents

Annual report

Chief Executive & Chair welcome	03
Overview of our assets	04-05
Learning highlights	06-23
Trustees' report	24-30
Legal & administration details	31



Chief Executive & Chair welcome

Ed Ikin & Mary Riall

It's my second full year with the Ernest Cook Trust and the privilege of leading this extraordinary organisation still feels novel and invigorating. In a world that can feel, at times, unsettling, being part of Ernest Cook is an enriching counterpoint to the negativity and disquiet.

The news cycle is turbulent and often deeply reductive. We are paying more, for less. The country is 'broken' and we are waiting, perpetually, for 'growth' to change the equation. Our own agency feels constrained when set against perceived failure of national systems and policy. Nothing lasts for long.

It can take as little as a walk in nature to start changing that narrative. If we have time, space and a receptive mind, our observation skills – honed over millennia of evolution – activate. We spot movement as birds dart in and out of hedgerows, subtle changes in texture and colour and feel contrasting environmental conditions on our skin.

Exertion, fresh air, natural light, diversities of sounds and shapes: fundamental forces that shaped our development as a species, can change us, change how we feel, change how we think, change our internal narrative. And this resource, this wonderful, life-attuning force will be there again, renewed for us tomorrow, and next week, and next year.

It's no wonder that so many young people 'change' when they

experience outdoor learning with us or one of our partners. Abilities to learn, to behave and to interact, identified as 'issues' in a classroom emerge in new environments. Suddenly, there's a possibility to thrive.

As an organisation, we have two critical assets to contribute to a society full of challenge and constraint:

With our learning programmes, grantmaking and network-building, we can create more opportunities for young people to learn outdoors and experience a different, positive narrative. From initial sparks of interest and connection can come longer-term relationships, with schools and young people who may, eventually, choose careers in farming or nature.

With our land, across six counties and multiple geographies, we can offer a perpetual, endless renewable resource. A place to learn, train and access. Our estates are not islands or isolated oases, they sit within catchments, parish and district councils and on the edge of communities. Our land can power our purpose and increase the opportunities we provide in the long-term. This annual report captures the essence of our work and the resources we can share to make a difference. We're here for the long-term and committed to making a difference.

And of course, enormous thanks to our partners, collaborators and all the Trust staff who make this work possible.

Ed Ikin



Mary and Ed with trustees and directors at Court Farm

Overview of our assets

Looking after land to enrich lives, for all.

We care for over 9,000 hectares of land across six counties, from the fells of Cumbria to the fields of Dorset. Our land offers us both a place to learn and a vital source of income and we invest in its sustainability and future.

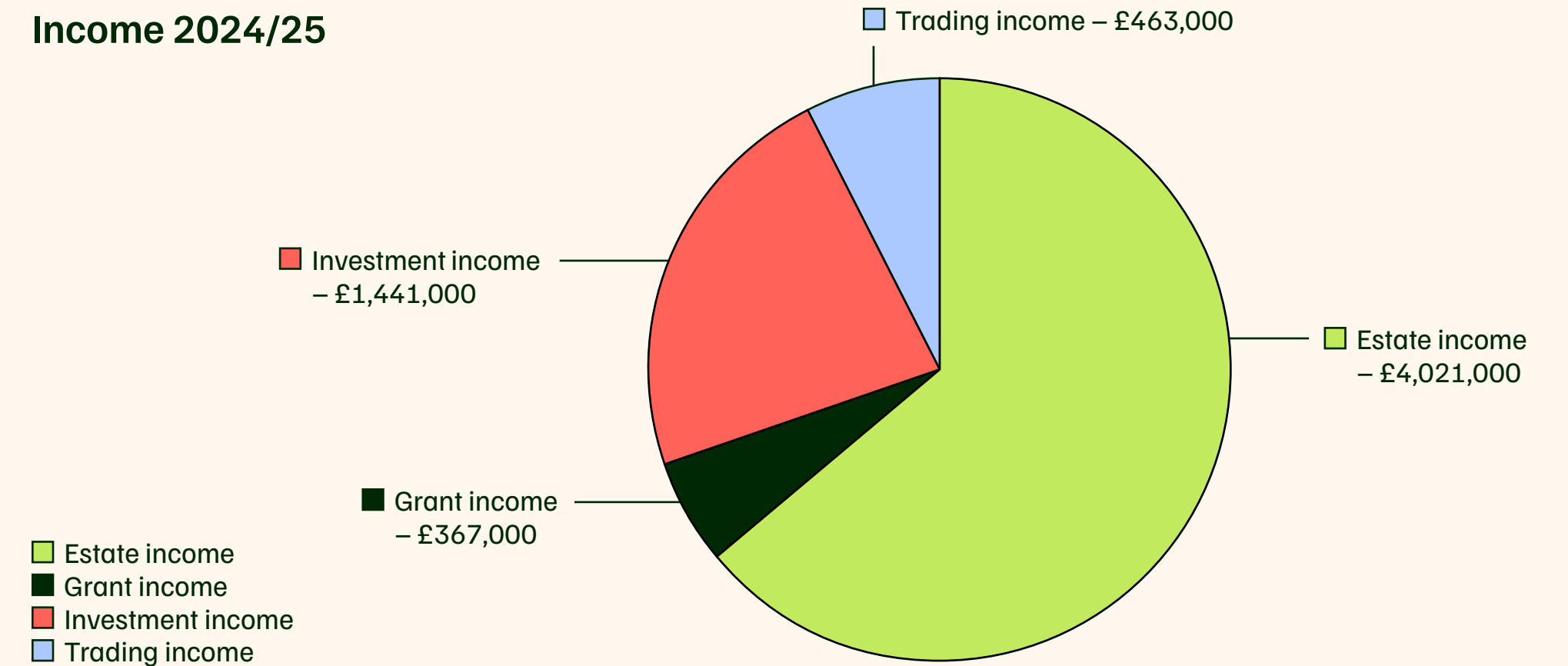
Income from our estates, along with returns on our investment portfolio and grant funding from the public and third sector, help fund our charitable work in outdoor learning and education.

Our charitable spend enables us to provide restricted and unrestricted grant funding, and to offer direct learning on our own land. Our land is a valuable asset and at the heart of who we are, so a large part of

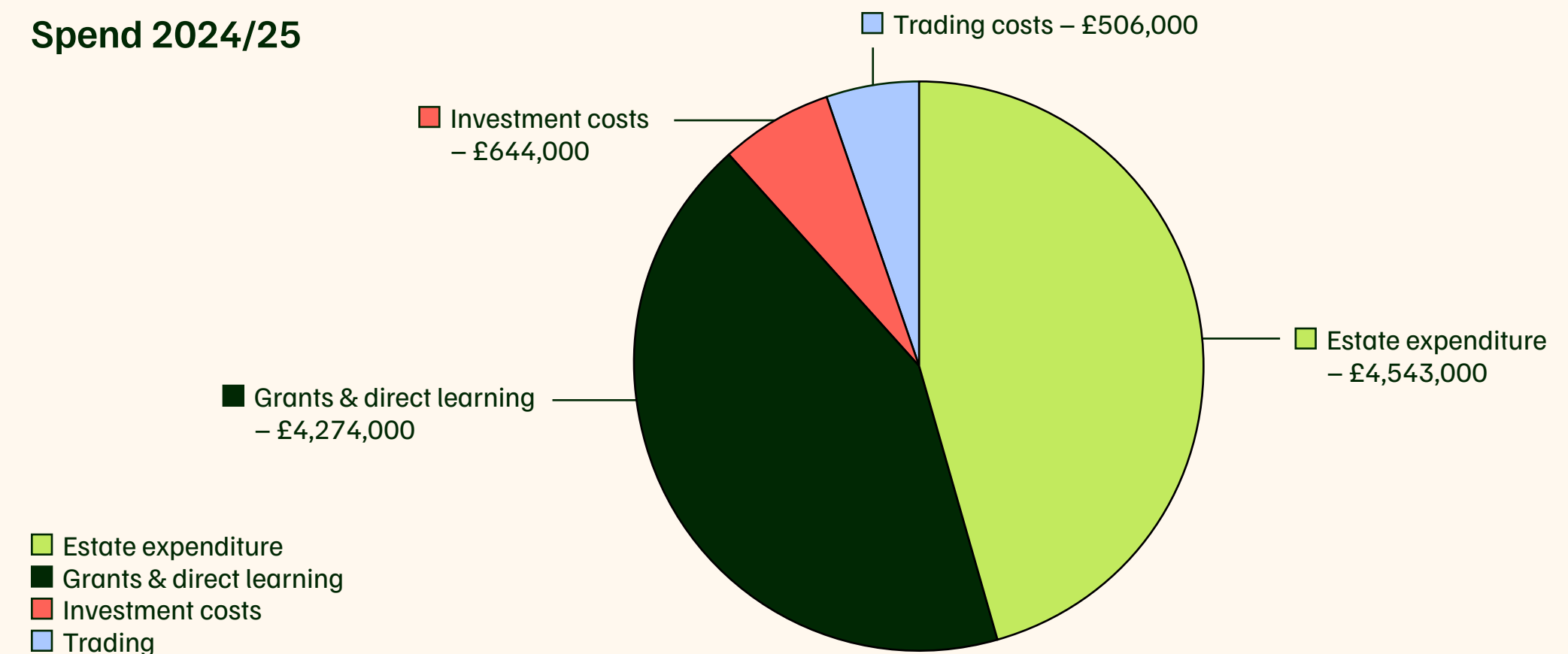
our annual spend goes on maintaining and strengthening our estates. This reflects our belief in progressive stewardship, maintaining the economic vibrancy and sustainability of the land, and our commitment to our tenants and local communities.

Our full Annual Report & Accounts can be found on the Charity Commission website or please get in touch.

Income 2024/25

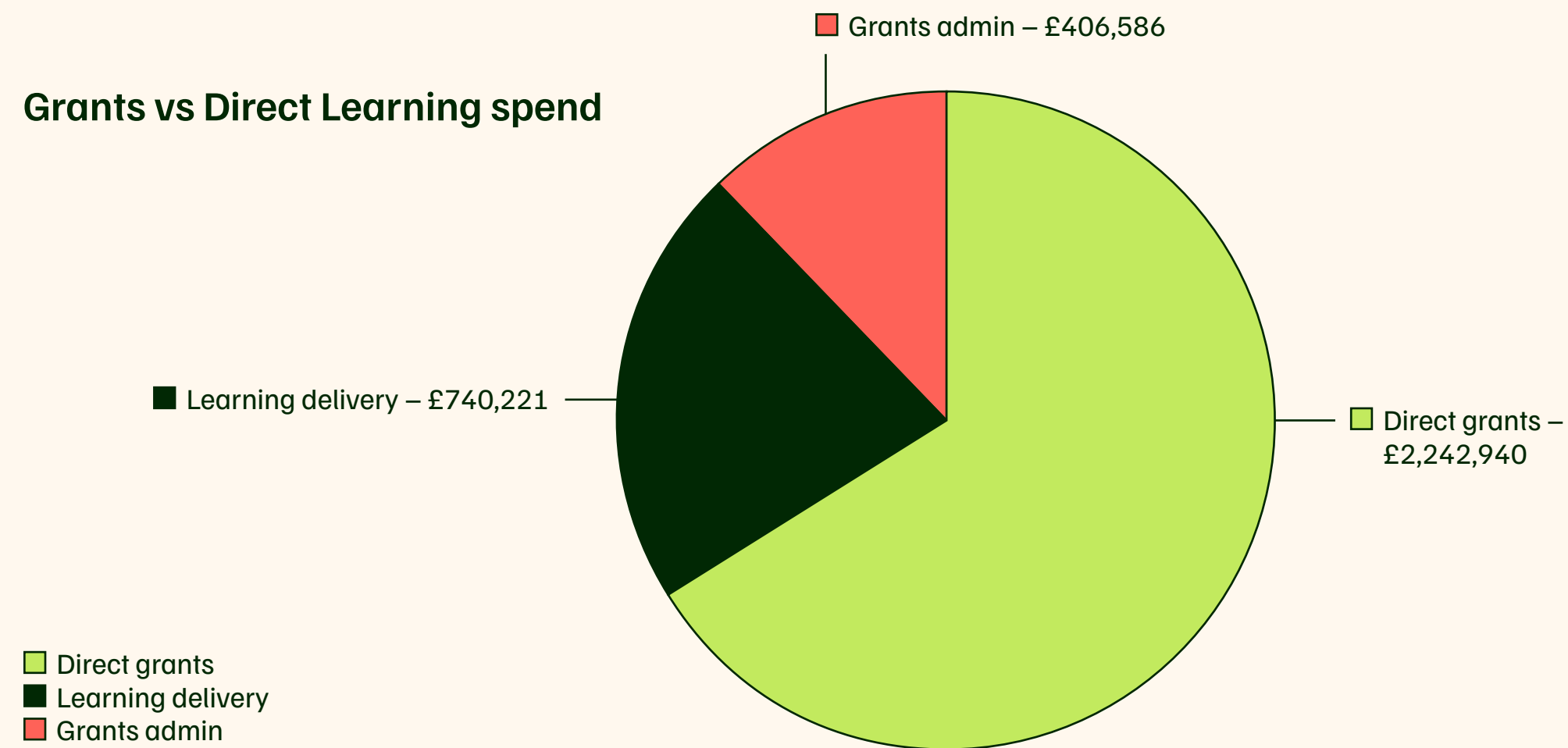


Spend 2024/25



Overview of our assets

Because land is our classroom.



More than half of our grantees in 2024/25 were new, and there has been a notable increase in new organisations receiving funding since 2020.

Our spending on grants and learning delivery increased year on year

2024/25

£4,274,000

2023/24

£3,664,000

Up by £610,000

In addition to our direct grant funding streams, we have two grant-funded programmes: the Blue Influencers Scheme which is match-funded with the #iwill Fund, and The OWL Collaboration supported by the Dulverton Trust.

We were able to fund 121 organisations and 455 schools this year. 30% of these organisations operate nationally, but we continue to focus our grant-giving in specific areas on and around our land. 79% of grant giving was for work within one of our geographical “hub” areas.

Down-to-earth learning

Highlights from our learning delivery in 2024-25

At the Ernest Cook Trust we help cultivate a lifelong love for the land – from the earliest years to long-lasting careers. We do this on our own land, and with the support of incredible partners across the UK. So from supporting parents and carers of under-5s in Lancashire to working with young people in coastal communities across the UK, we wanted to share some highlights from 2024-25.

“After the trip I have felt more connected to nature, spending more time outside EVERY day which wasn't actually bad and was really fun.”





This year, we helped

4,859

young people get outdoors with our Outdoor Learning delivery.

That's

651

sessions in the fresh air.

In collaboration with

84

schools or organisations.

Over

70%

of these were across our Home Estates in Hatherop and Fairford, Slimbridge in Gloucestershire and Trent in Dorset.

NORTH

1,394 individuals

23 schools & orgs doing Outdoor Learning

SOUTH

3,465 individuals

61 schools & orgs





We also shared land-based skills with

342

young people in

297

sessions.

In collaboration with

15

different schools or organisations to equip young people with the skills and passion to possibly pursue a career outdoors.



Land is for all of us

Highlights from some of our grants in 2024-25

Outdoor Essentials Grant

Total no. grants awarded:
366

Total amount awarded:
£238,500

Outdoor Learning Leader Grant

Further Outdoor Learning Leader grants awarded:
10

Total for this cohort:
£199,000

Total in OLL grants for 2024-25:
£541,000

“The most valuable aspect of the transport grant was the opportunity it provided to bring students to a rich and beautiful space that many would not otherwise have had the confidence or means to access. For some of our students—particularly those who wear the hijab or come from culturally underrepresented backgrounds—there can be barriers, both visible and invisible, to engaging with outdoor and public spaces.”

Quote from an Outdoor Essentials Grant recipient





In February 2025, 110 Outdoor Learning professionals from across the UK gathered to listen and learn together around the theme of Opening Outdoors. We heard far reaching perspectives from a range of experts with an opportunity to explore and debate the challenges and assumptions that allow the inequitable access to nature to persist.

90% of respondents finding the event useful or extremely useful: “I came away feeling a renewed energy and passion for what I do.”

A life-long love of the outdoors

Celebrating our Little Saplings programme

In 2025 we celebrated the end of our 3-year Little Saplings programme as part of the Connecting People and Nature project* – helping 105 families and carers introduce outdoor play to their under-5s. We are so pleased to have supported over 1000 attendees to engage with nature and the outdoors, in ways that are not always available or accessible to everyone.

Our aim was to support families who may face barriers to spending time in nature and local green spaces, inspiring them to get outside and reconnect with nature whilst discovering activities to re-create independently at home or in a local green space.

Inspired by the Forest School ethos, we offered child-led outdoor free-play, enabling each child to play at their own pace and

in their own unique way. Using a 4 Steps to Nature approach (Notice - Think - Act - Reflect), we did things like minibeast hunting, natural crafts, story time and woodland play. All of these free sessions, in local parks and community spaces, aimed to nurture independent outdoor play in young children, whilst also supporting parents and carers to reconnect with nature, as we know how much it supports all of our wellbeing and mental health to spend time outdoors.

2023

42

sessions in Pendle Borough at Victoria Park and Burnley Borough at Scott Park.

2024

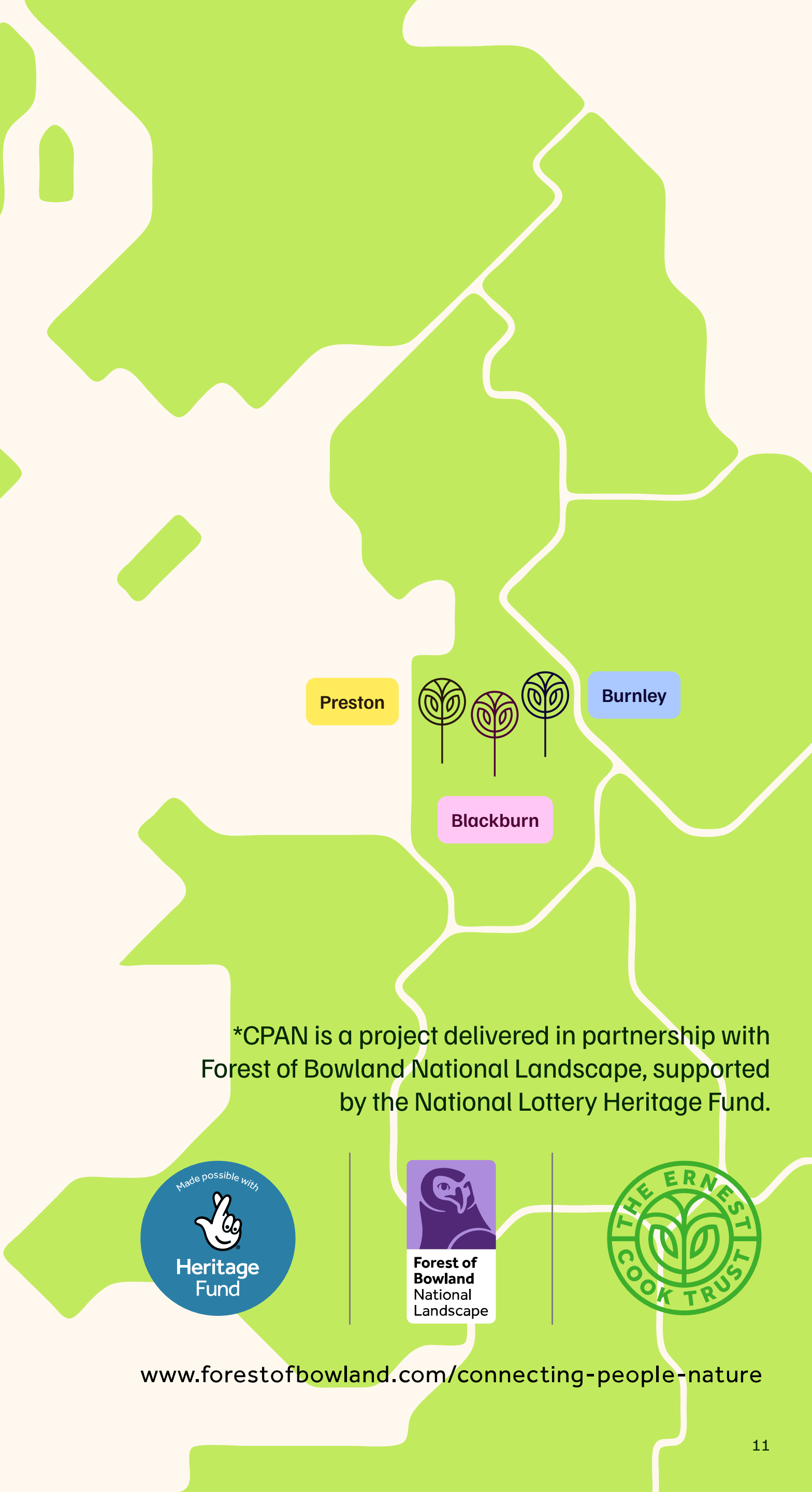
39

sessions in Corporation Park and Queens Park, Blackburn.

2025

44

sessions in Ryelands Park, Lancaster, and Grange Park, Preston.



*CPAN is a project delivered in partnership with Forest of Bowland National Landscape, supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.



www.forestofbowland.com/connecting-people-nature

Although the Little Saplings programme was only for three years, we know that when the seeds of connection are sown early, they can grow into a life-long love of the outdoors. And we have continued to support this growth with over 50 “Little Saplings Explorer kit bags” that included resources and how-to guides to help cultivate a love of nature at home, out and about, or on special visits.

We are happy to have shared four Little Saplings Activity Resource boxes with...

- Blackburn’s Family Hub, and Wellbeing Service team
- Preston’s Ribbleton Family Hub, and Lancaster’s Lune Park Family Hub

These provide organisations with their own resources to help support families develop the skills and confidence to connect with nature and the outdoors – especially local green spaces and parks – and continue to embed these opportunities with local communities.

“I think like Little Saplings is wonderful, and I think there needs to be more of this sort of thing. I’m glad I’ve stumbled upon this group, because it’s something that I think is missing from communities.”



125 Little Saplings sessions.

6 parks and communities.

1194 adults and children.

51 Little Saplings Explorer Kit Bags handed out to families.

Where life can take root and flourish

The transformative effect of an outdoor week of learning

The OWL Collaboration (Outdoor Week of Learning): Year 4

The OWL Collaboration is a funding programme led by the Ernest Cook Trust, with the Dulverton Trust and in partnership with 10 Outdoor Learning Centres. At the heart of the programme is a week-long farm or nature-based residential experience for school-aged young people (8-18) from a combination of primary, secondary and special needs schools.

It provides young people with:

- The outdoors in all elements
- Routines and responsibilities
- A focus on social connection
- Opportunities for regular reflection
- Limited access to technology

Our partners in delivery are:



This year saw the creation of a new legacy programme, OWL Nest Schools, in response to an identified need for more sustained support for schools who are ready to commit to embedding outdoor learning into school life.

OWL Nest Schools

20 schools received support and grant funding to kickstart a range of Outdoor Learning projects, aligned teacher training and outreach visits from our valued Outdoor Learning partners both pre and post their Outdoor Week of Learning.



OWL Network

We continue to build a community of practice in collaboration with our OWL delivery partners. This year has seen more opportunities to evolve our joint evaluation, develop our shared resources and engage in learning and sharing days.



Emerging OWL Nest projects:

- Sensory gardening clubs
- School community allotments
- Farm to school days
- Field to Fork festivals
- Outdoor climate action plans
- Chickens!



Teacher reflection

Outdoor Learning is flourishing at Bannerman Road Primary, with daily gardening clubs, assemblies on garden care, and staff training from ‘Love Outdoor Learning’ building confidence to teach outside. Maths led the way, with more subjects joining through Years 2 and 3 of the Nest programme.

The Shallowford farm experience is increasingly embedded, supported by well-known projects like The mural and Sensory Fairy Garden. With Nest, the OWL programme now has an even stronger presence in school. Both staff and pupils value its emotional and educational impact -

“Once you’re a Shallowford kid, you’re always a Shallowford kid!”

Anna Hicks, Pastoral Lead,
Bannerman Road Community Academy, Bristol

Key themes of The OWL Collaboration:

Connection

“I don’t know. It just seemed to happen... before long you’re just talking to people and it’s happening and everything feels fine.”

KS4 OWL pupil



Purpose

“They’re not here to be entertained; the children have responsibilities... that is a lesson they don’t get anywhere else.”

Teacher, OWL Primary School



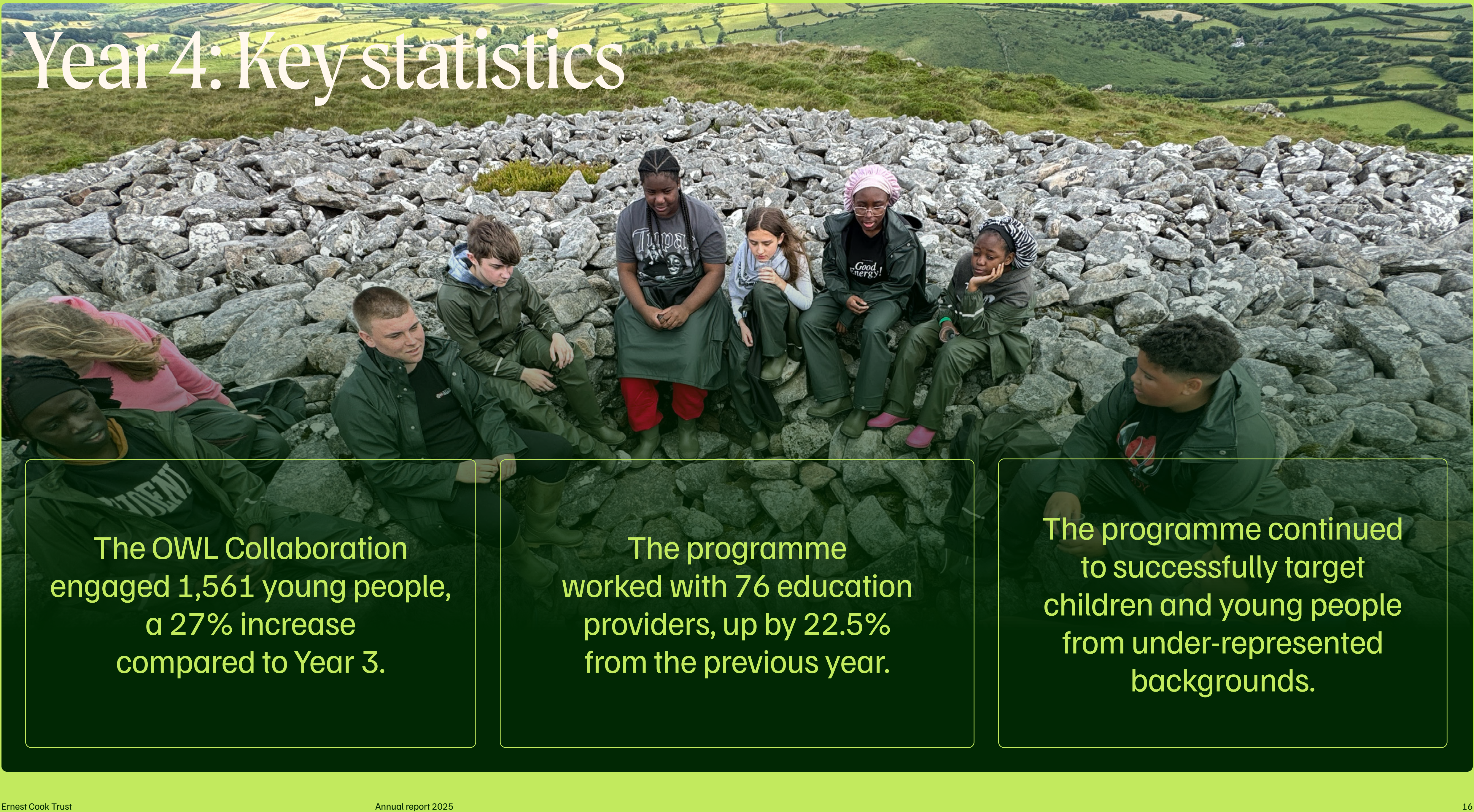
Grit & growth

“The children have a better sense of themselves and what they can do, some have come back more resilient, others will try things they wouldn’t have tried before.”

Teacher, OWL Primary School



Year 4: Key statistics



The OWL Collaboration engaged 1,561 young people, a 27% increase compared to Year 3.

The programme worked with 76 education providers, up by 22.5% from the previous year.

The programme continued to successfully target children and young people from under-represented backgrounds.

The first year of our Blue Influencers Scheme

We are seeing emerging impacts from the first year of our Blue Influencers Scheme, with positive effects felt on the young people involved and their schools, youth groups and host organisations.

Groups take part in river and beach cleans, plant wildflowers or native trees, build bug hotels, or create habitats to support local biodiversity. In some areas, young people worked with local experts or partner organisations to learn about local species and the impact of pollution or habitat degradation.

Projects have included a wide range of activities designed to help young people appreciate and connect with the natural environment. Common activities include nature walks, mindfulness exercises outdoors, beach visits, wildlife spotting, and

creative tasks such as drawing or writing about nature. Activities aim to build a sense of belonging and comfort in nature, even in places that felt unfamiliar or underused.

Many projects are using discussion-based or creative activities to help young people think about environmental issues relevant to their communities — such as single-use plastics, limited recycling facilities, or pollution in nearby rivers. Young people are supported to research and discuss these challenges, and in some cases, design actions in response. For example, groups launched awareness campaigns, created

posters, presented their findings, or worked with school staff to improve recycling. In community settings, some groups carried out audits of local environmental practices or explored ways to reduce waste.

Young people described feeling more confident, mindful, and aware of their environment. Some shared that they now see themselves as ambassadors for nature or feel a stronger connection to the natural world. For several young people, the project helped them realise that even small actions—like picking up litter or sharing ideas with family—can have an impact.

“[The organisation] has wanted to have a Youth Advisory Board for years, and off the back of this project I was able to pitch the idea of this properly and made sure that we could allocate the time and funding towards that. We have now put it into place.”

Blue Mentor



“A lot of young people experience climate anxiety, so we try to avoid leading with doom and gloom. Keeping it local helps, because they can actually have an impact on the things they’re engaging with locally.”

Blue Mentor



Activities aim to build a sense of belonging and comfort in nature, even in places that felt unfamiliar or underused.



The ripple effect: Youth empowerment & environmental action

Schools and youth groups are moving towards more youth-led approaches as a result of being part of the Scheme and increasing their focus on environmental action, including encouraging the creation of new green and blue spaces.

Organisations have created Youth Advisory Boards or new youth roles within their organisations and staff have grown knowledge and understanding of environmental education and youth facilitation.

This three year Scheme is joint-funded by the #iwill Fund. 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.

Proudly supporting youth social action



Department for Culture Media & Sport



Low Beckside Farm

Growing our places, purpose and potential in Cumbria

A lot of our learning takes place with partners all over the country, but we do also deliver a lot of outdoor learning on our own land.



A great example of where this is growing and thriving is Low Beckside Farm. And as we renovate old buildings and grow our local ecosystem in the area, we will be able to open up more learning spaces on site and welcome more learning groups to the farm.



In 2024-25 we hosted 2 Outdoor Weeks of Learning (OWL) visits. We also welcomed new and existing partners in the region, as well as new staff members Jane and Theo.



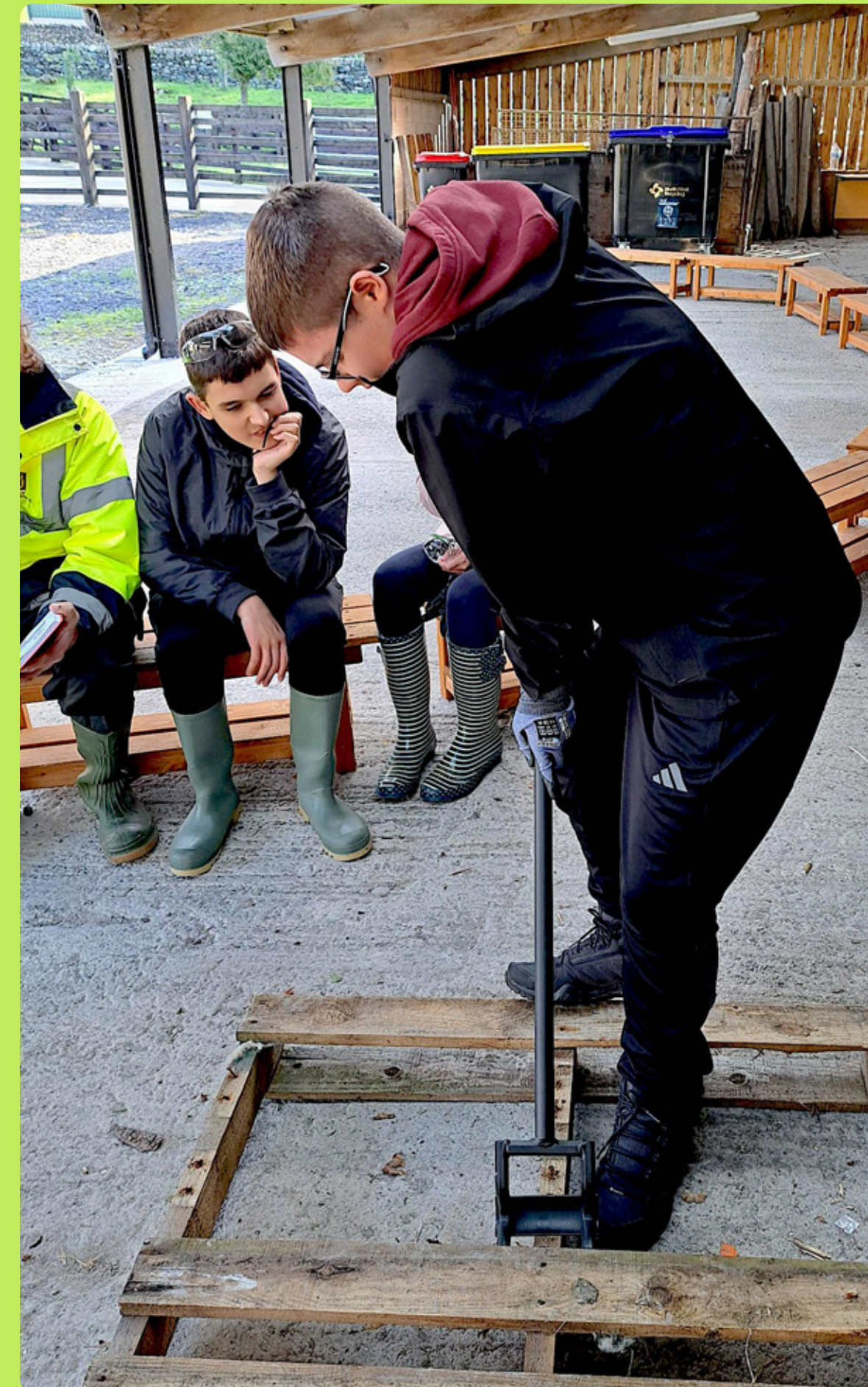


Project highlight

The Low Beckside team continue to build long-term relationships with local partners and settings, including Ullswater Community College. This work supports students on an alternative pathway provision, through a range of farm-based learning and rural skills activities. Students work towards the Trust's Employability Skills Award, building transferable skills and real-world experience to support their transition from school into local employment.

“Our Employability Award is addressing a real need for young people in Cumbria – the skills they learn are skills for life, and the confidence gained is vital in helping each person navigate their route into employment after leaving school.”

Vicki McDermott, Head of Learning, Operations & Partnerships (North)



Young people at Low Beckside



Outdoor Learning Trainee **Theonitsa Kindyni** has a teaching background and is based in Lancashire. She has thrived in the role, achieving Forest School Level 3 training, and supported our outdoor family, school, and community sessions with project partner, The Forest of Bowland National Landscape.

One of our Cumbria Connect apprentices, **Yasmin Alieskandari**, completed her 6-month secondment at Low Beckside. She has since moved on to a role as a Farm Advisor with a land agent.



Joe Walker started his secondment as part of Cumbria Connect in March 2025. He is now a self-employed dry stone waller working with landowners across Cumbria.



Strategic partnerships

With our partner the Country Trust, we ran an OWL pilot at Low Becks, including teacher CPD sessions, Country Trust team training at Low Becks, and 2 OWL residential school visits in Autumn 2024.

Low Becks signed up to the Climate Demo farm project, one of 1,500 farms across Europe, which aims to show how small changes to farming practices can reduce farm emissions and/or sequester carbon, whilst boosting profitability.

We hosted the Dry Stone Walling Competition in partnership with Friends of the Lakes District and the Dry Stone Walling Association (a recipient of our Outdoor Futures grant). This led to further hedge-laying and biodiversity surveying courses, in partnership with Friends of the Lake District.

In partnership with the University of Cumbria, the Low Becks team hosted field visits for new short courses - Mapping Environmental Assets and Upland farming for Net Zero courses.

Trustees' report





Financial review

The Trust continues with its core activities and optimising its resources, whilst developing the 2026-2030 strategy for the charity focussing on the delivery of Education and Outdoor Learning in a holistically sustainable way. The work of the charity continues to be resourced by income from land and property, investments and co-funding grants.

As a part of the strategic development, a review of physical assets has given rise to a number of projects - some of which crystallised during the year - including the development of five homes at Fiennes Court in Fairford through the subsidiary company Mintglebe Limited and the refurbishment of Court Farm, which became the head office in April 2025. We will continue to optimise our land and building portfolio to generate income and capital growth, in order to fund the organisation's education ambitions, including commercial and environmental returns.

The Trust increased its overall Reserves by £1.35m in the year (2024: £15.1m); an increase of £2.1m into the Endowment Fund and a decrease of £0.8m in the Unrestricted General Reserve; the Designated Reserves remains at £1.6m to cover Planned Preventative Maintenance on the Residential Estate. The increase in Endowment Reserves is driven by the property portfolio in the year; gain on disposals of £2.7m (2024: £1.2m) and a positive revaluation of £2.0m (2024: £13.8m). The Investment Portfolio delivered income of £1.4m into the Unrestricted Reserve (2024: £1.2m) and £0.2m (2024: £2.7m) into the Endowment through revaluation gain.

The valuation gain was reduced due to the global economic conditions on 31st March 2025.

The Ernest Cook Trust has four discrete areas of income and expenditure:

Education

- The grants that we make forming the core of our charitable activity, and the cost of managing those grants
- The costs of delivering learning outdoors

Estates

- The rental income we receive from our properties; residential, commercial and agricultural
- Profits / losses on the disposal of property investments
- The increase / decrease in the value of our property investments
- The costs of managing the estates

Investments

- Income from dividends and interest
- Increase / decrease in the value of investments
- The costs of managing our investment portfolio

Overheads

- The running expenses of the Ernest Cook Trust (of which staff costs are the major component)
- Costs of governance

This reflects the total of our Charitable Activity and the work we deliver directly to fund the activity.

Grant making and education

We have two sources of direct income for the delivery of education; the Blue Influencers scheme attracts a restricted grant of £307k in the year which has been partially expensed in FY 25 and will be completely used in FY 26. This is treated as restricted income. We also receive £60k per annum towards the costs of delivering the Outdoor Learning scheme.

Spending on Grants and Learning activities rose to £4.3m (2024:£3.7m) an increase of 16% (2024: 22%) over the previous year. Of this, £2.1m (2024: £2.1m) was distributed as grant funding. The cost of supporting the Grants and Learning delivery was £940k (2024:£738k) in salaries and related people and overhead costs.

Estates operating income and expenditure

Estates income rose by 3% to £4.0m (2024: £3.9m). The Trust continued to invest in estate works, with increased expenditure of £4.5m (2024: £4.0m) from higher repairs and renewals and salary costs.

Estates capital disposals

During the year there were disposals made which generated cash of £17.9m (2024: £3m) and a profit / loss on disposal of £2.7m (2024: £1.2m).

Estates revaluation

The Open Market valuation at the end of the year increased reserves by £2m related to the revaluation of properties at 31st March 2025.

Investment income

The Trust's financial investments generated an income (including interest) of £1.4m (2024: £1.2m), increasing in value by £3m in the year. This followed the restructure of the portfolio to increase the balance of equities and provide higher potential returns on the investment.

The overall return from the Trust's financial investments was 2.5% for the year (2024, 17%), which reflected the turbulence in the financial markets. The Investment Managers have a mandate of achieving a return of 4% plus the increase in the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) over the course of an economic cycle which was increased from the previous target of 3% over CPI in 2024.

Overheads

The Trust aims to cover the core support costs from investment income and this year the operating cost of supporting all activity was £2.2m (2024: £1.8m) all of which is allocated to Education and Estate activity. The increased costs relate to salaries, governance and IT expenditure.

Reserves policy

The Trust has an Expendable Endowment, as such the risk of not having adequate reserves is judged by the Trustees to be low. Within this context, the Trustees' policy is for the Trust to hold liquid assets equivalent to at least six months' working capital, including grant commitments. The Expendable Endowment represents the Endowment of the Charity at 31 March 2025 at £315.18m (2024 re-£312.83m).

Fundraising policy

The Trustees are aware of their obligations under the Charities Act to report the charity's fundraising policy. We engage with statutory funders, trusts and foundations to explore co-funding opportunities and raise income but do not engage in public fundraising or use commercial fundraisers. There have been no complaints or instances of non-compliance with any code (2024 none).

Remuneration policy

The Trust's pay policy, pay structure and changes to employee terms and conditions are reviewed by the Remuneration Committee, which includes the Chair and two other Trustees, who then make recommendations to the Board of Trustees. The Chair of Trustees determines the salary and other benefit changes for the Chief Executive in conjunction with the Remuneration Committee. The Trust's Memorandum and Articles of Association authorise the payment of Trustees, in line with the founder's wishes. A separate committee of independent experts convene to review the remuneration of Trustees from time to time.

Equity, diversity and inclusion

The Ernest Cook Trust recognises the value of every individual and actively promotes equality of opportunity. It is a welcoming organisation where everyone is highly valued and where tolerance, honesty, cooperation and mutual respect for all are fostered.

The Trust firmly believes in equity of opportunity in employment. We are committed to developing policies, practices and procedures that promote this ensuring everyone receives equal treatment.

Some examples of where we ensure Equity, Diversity and Inclusion are:

- Each stage of the recruitment process has been adapted to remove barriers and unconscious bias, including advertising roles with diverse listing such as Ethnic Jobsite and redacting personal information from CVs
- Compliance with equal opportunities legislation and equity best practice
- We are a participating organisation in the RACE report

The Trustees are aware of the continued impact from pressures and challenges posed by the uncertain nature of both global and domestic politics and its influence on the economic situation. The consequence of this uncertainty has been increased costs, with a potential to affect operations. To mitigate this, we continue to exercise careful management of our assets to maintain a balance between income and expenditure.

The Leadership team holds regular sessions to review their department's ongoing financial performance against the annual budgets, whilst the Audit, Finance & Investment Committee further review this at their quarterly meetings

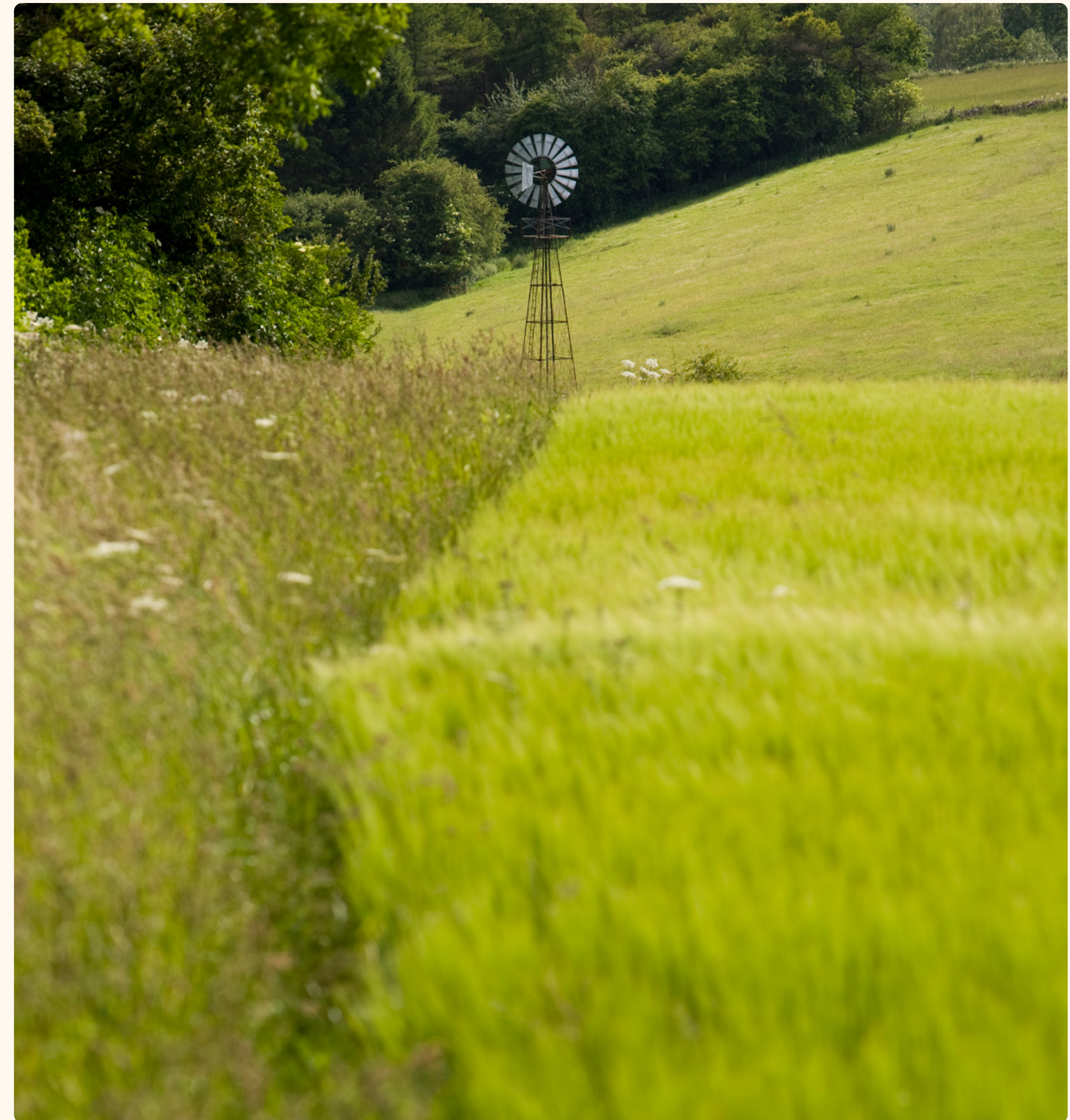
Investments

The Trust's charitable activities are funded through returns from its investment portfolio, income from its land and property, and external grants and donations. Our finance and investment policies aim to provide long-term stability and liquidity, ensuring the financing of our charitable activities while maintaining the real value of the endowment.

The Trust's Investment Policy sets out the long-term investment objective, risk profile, strategic asset allocation and investment restrictions. It also includes our policies on Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG). The policy reflects a total return objective considering all sources of return, allowing both income from the portfolio and the underlying capital to support charitable activities.

The Trustees have established a policy on socially responsible investment and sustainability, aligned with the Trust's aims and objectives.

Our Investment Managers are expected to adhere to this policy when making investment decisions, and to report on how ESG considerations have been applied in the selection and management of investments.



Risk

The Trustees are responsible for overseeing the risks faced by the Trust. We regularly review these risks through our Leadership team, committees and the full Board of Trustees, utilising a comprehensive Risk Register. This identifies each risk, its potential severity 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 financial regulations, and the work of our external auditors.

Risks are mitigated by:

- Regularly reviewing internal policies
- Ensuring adequate reporting procedures from operational to Board level
- Providing relevant training across the organisation
- Taking appropriate and timely professional advice
- Ensuring the Trust is appropriately insured against risks

Principal risks & uncertainties financial

The Trust's financial position is inevitably exposed to risks from the wider economy and national and global financial, policy and environmental developments; we keep these matters under continuous review.

With the recognised benefits for Outdoor Learning

and growth in demand for our charitable activities, we continue to look at ways which will maximise future income, including the long- and medium-term development of our investment assets to produce higher returns. The aim is to achieve this by both development and renovation of assets thereby enabling continued delivery of our charitable work. The Trustees remain confident in the long-term resilience of our finances.

Cyber crime

In common with all charities, we remain acutely aware of the risks associated with increased global cyber-crime. Staff are regularly reminded of the risks and specific nature of these crimes as they develop. We foster a risk aware culture within the organisation, which is crucial in mitigating this risk.

Health & safety

There is some risk associated with children and young people learning outdoors and with managing large, landed estates. We manage this risk through 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.

Safeguarding

Trustees have accountability to ensure the safeguarding of children, young people and adults at risk, and aim to protect from harm anyone that comes into contact with the Trust. All Trustees and staff undertake regular safeguarding training. Our

Senior Safeguarding Lead, a Trustee (Dr Zainab Kabba), works with our Designated Safeguarding Lead (Suzie Paton) and Deputy Safeguarding Leads to ensure that our policy is up to date and consistently upheld. Everyone associated with the Trust is aware that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and the Trust follows safer recruitment guidelines.

Operational risk

This is mitigated through the regular reviews of activities and use of professional advisors. 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, and we plan Trustee succession to ensure that the right mix of skills, experience, and expertise is maintained.

The Trustees have appointed four Trustee-led committees to monitor specialist areas of activity; Property, Learning, Audit, Finance & Investment, and Remuneration. A transparent culture and open communication with the executive helps Trustees maintain thorough and up to date oversight of the organisation.



Trustee	Board	Property	AFI	Learning	Remuneration
Mary E Riall	*				*
Dr Zainab Kabba	*			*	
Jenefer D Greenwood OBE	*	*			*
Dr Ian Gambles FCMA	*	*	*		*
Ian Pigott OBE DL	*	*		*	
Rory Landman	*		*		
Natalie Campbell MBE MIH	*		*		
Stephen Vickers	*	*			
Meetings per annum	4	4	4	4	1

Structure & 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 moved from the Fairford Estate in Gloucestershire to Quenington in April 2025. The Trust is a charity registered in England and Wales, number 1146629. There are currently eight Trustees, appointed for a three-year term and may serve a maximum of five terms.

New Trustees are provided with an induction programme and individual Trustee evaluations are conducted annually by the Chair. 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 of behalf of the Trust, over and above that normally expected of a charity Trustee.

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 the Director of Land, Property and Commercial Development; Director of Finance, Director of Learning, Grants & Partnerships, Director of People & Culture and Director of Communications & Engagement.

The subsidiary companies have their own Boards and meet quarterly to discuss the business of each subsidiary. The directors include trustees and leadership as follows:

	Mintglebe	ECT Farms
Jenefer D Greenwood OBE	Trustee	Trustee
Dr Ian Gambles FCMA	Trustee	
Ian Pigott OBE DL		Trustee
Michael Birnie	Executive	Executive
Louisa McCann	Executive	Executive

Related Parties

The Charity's wholly owned subsidiary, Mintglebe Limited, was established to operate the commercial acquisition, development and disposal of land and property and remits its surplus profits to the Charity (see note 15 to the accounts).

The wholly owned subsidiary company ECT Farms Limited was established to operate our farm related trading activity at Cumbria, Leicestershire and Buckinghamshire.

During the year Ernest Cook Trust transacted with the following organisations with whom it shares mutual Trustees:

Mintglebe Limited
ECT Farms Limited

The Trustees, who are also directors of the charity for the purposes of the Companies Act 2006, present their report with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2025. The Trustees have adopted the provisions of Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019).

Company law requires the directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under that law the directors have elected to prepare the financial statements in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom Accounting Standards and applicable law). Under company law the directors must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP (2019) FRS102
- make judgements and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent

- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in operation.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charitable company's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities. The Trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charitable company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

In so far as the Trustees are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditor is unaware; and
- the Trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

Auditor

In preparing this report, the Trustees have taken advantage of the small companies exemptions provided by Section 415a of the Companies Act 2006.

On behalf of the Trustees:



M E Riall, Chair of Trustees

Date:

Legal & administrative detail

There were a number of changes to these details in the year; the Trust moved into the new head office premises on 1st April 2025 and new auditors were appointed for the current years audit.

Company No.	7907411	Trustees	Appointed	Resigned
Charity No.	1146629			
Registered & Principal Office	Court Farm Church Road Quenington GL7 5BN	Mary E Riall (Chair) Dr Ian Gambles FCMA (Vice Chair) Harry M Henderson DL Ian Pigott OBE DL Jenefer D Greenwood OBE Rory Landman	24.11.15 01.01.24 28.03.12 14.09.22 05.04.17 16.06.23	12.12.24
Bankers	National Westminster Bank plc 32 Market Place Cirencester GL7 2NU	Simon F Eliot Dr Zainab Kabba Natalie Campbell MBE MIH Stephen Vickers	21.11.13 19.09.24 25.09.25 01.12.25	31.10.25
Solicitors	Michelmores LLP Eagle Tower Montpellier Drive Cheltenham GL50 1TA	Executive Team		
Auditor	Hazlewoods LLP Staverton Court Staverton Cheltenham GL51 0UX	Louisa McCann Michael A Birnie MRICS FAAV Suzie R Paton	Chief Executive Director of People & Culture Director of Communications & Engagement Director of Finance Director of Land, Property & Commercial Development Director of Learning, Grants & Partnerships	
Investment Adviser	Cazenove Capital Management 1, London Wall Place London EC2Y 5AU			

Ernest Cook

TRUST

The Ernest Cook Trust
Court Farm
Quenington
Gloucestershire
England GL7 5BN

01285 712492
hello@ernestcooktrust.org.uk
ernestcooktrust.org.uk