



The Land Trust
Annual Review
2023/24

Contents

Welcome	03
About the Land Trust	04
Our vision	04
New site acquisitions	06
Charitable objectives	08
Charitable delivery	09
Case studies	12
Summary financial information	18
Thank you	20

Welcome

from Alan Carter and Janet Dugdale

A year of growth, new opportunities and increased charitable delivery

Over the last 12 months, we have seen continued growth in the social value delivered across the Land Trust portfolio, with an estimated £38.7m worth of benefits delivered in 2023/24 - a 14% increase on 2022/23.

Our sites continue to play an essential role in supporting the physical and mental health of the communities who live and work around our sites. Collectively our sites received a record 2.4m visitors in 2023/24, greater even than the peak year of the first lockdown, showing unequivocally that our green spaces continue to be cherished community assets. 2023/24 saw a conscious change in health-related events across our sites as the number of mental health activities were upweighted in response to the increased anxiety and social isolation felt in post-pandemic society.

2023/24 was also very successful in terms of charitable delivery across other areas, including a significant increase in citizen science and in community activities. There has also been an increase of 41% in the number of people taking part in the organisation's award-winning Green Angels courses.

Despite a continually challenging economic climate, particularly within the development industry, we are delighted to report the Land Trust took on five new sites in 2023/24, including two new service charge sites and three SANG (Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces) which will in turn further increase the delivery of our charitable aims.

As communities across the country continue to feel the squeeze of the cost-of-living crisis, the Land Trust remains committed to managing green spaces for the benefit of the communities who live and work around our sites. Through this we work to protect, maintain and enhance biodiversity, both on our sites and the wider environment. We believe access to high-quality green space for all members of local communities can offer significant social value, including benefits to both physical and mental health.

2.4m
visitors

£222.3m
assets

£197.3m
returns

2
new service
charge
sites

3
new
SANGS

Financial performance

2023/24 was a successful year for the Land Trust financially, and we are pleased to announce our balance sheet remains in a strong position with net assets as of 31st March 2024 of £222.3m, of which £3.4m was classified as General Funds. Total investment income during the year was £7.4m.

This income enables us to manage our sites sustainably and to deliver our charitable outcomes. Costs are tightly controlled by the Trust as we move increasingly closer to financial self-sufficiency.

2023/24 saw a positive return on investments, ending the year at £197.3m.

Also, following the launch of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain legislation in February 2024, the Land Trust received its first income from Biodiversity Net Gain projects totalling £169K.

New Chair

Professor Janet Dugdale was appointed as Chair of the Land Trust in December 2023, taking over from William Hiscocks who served four years in the position. Janet had been a member of the Land Trust's Board of Trustees for six years prior to accepting the position of Chair.

The Land Trust's Board of Trustees generously share their time and expertise to help guide and shape the success of the Land Trust. For this we are sincerely grateful.

We would like to offer our personal thanks to everyone who has contributed to the success of the Land Trust, including the invaluable support of our member organisations, and the significant part our managing partners play in onsite delivery. Our thanks also must go to the Land Trust colleagues for their continued hard work and commitment.

Professor Janet Dugdale, Chair of Trustees and Alan Carter, Chief Executive

In 2024, the Land Trust turns 20. For the last 20 years the organisation has been delivering social, economic and environmental benefits and developing an unparalleled breadth and depth of skills in land ownership, management and stewardship. Working together with clients, partners and communities, the organisation has not only improved green spaces, but also positively changed lives.

The Land Trust has a growing portfolio of 86 sites, from country parks and former colliery sites, to sites of contaminated land, SuDS, service charge sites and SANG (Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace), in addition to a growing list of Biodiversity Net Gain projects.

Totalling over 2,500ha of land, the sites deliver a collective £38.7m a year in social value, all while being underpinned by an investment portfolio of £197.3 million.

While much has been delivered over the last 20 years, and we have a track record of success, we are now turning our attention to the next two decades. The world and human society are rapidly changing and the impacts of climate change are set to only grow.

To help us navigate and adapt to the future, we embarked upon an in-depth study looking at the key expected trends in relation to the Trust's main areas of interest – society and community, physical and mental health and the environment. Working alongside an extensive list of specialist partners, members and experts, we will use the results of the study to shape our strategy going forward. This report will be published during financial year 2024/25.

Our vision for the future is clear, as we look to build on a legacy of delivering sustainable solutions to complex problems supporting clients, communities and the environment.

To help us navigate and adapt to the future, we embarked upon an in-depth study looking at the key expected trends in relation to the Trust's main areas of interest.

Our Vision

To improve the social and economic quality of people's lives by creating sustainable, high quality green spaces.



About the Land Trust



86
sites



2.4m
visitors in 2023/24



2,500ha
of land



£38.7m
a year in
social value



£197.3m
investment
portfolio



New site acquisitions

A total of five new sites were welcomed into the Land Trust portfolio in 2023/24 including two service charge sites.

SANG (Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces)

The Land Trust took on the ownership and management of three new SANGs, funded through the provision of monies at the point of transfer of the site. These new additions bring the Trust's total SANG portfolio to 14 sites spanning nearly 400 hectares.

All three sites were all created to relieve pressure on the nearby Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (SPA). These green spaces will help the Trust protect and improve the environment, achieve important charitable delivery, and social value for the local community, while their acquisition promotes the Land Trust to the largest private SANG owner in the region. More details below:

📍 **OLDLANDS COPSE** - London Strategic Land transferred the 17-hectare Oldlands Copse to the Land Trust in September 2023. Surrey Wildlife Trust, the Land Trust's regional managing partner, will manage the site with a focus on improving the ancient woodland and wildflower meadows, whilst maintaining the rewilding areas.

📍 **SUNNINGDALE** - Sunningdale Park was transferred to the Land Trust from Berkeley Oxford and Chilterns in November 2023. This 19-hectare Grade II-listed parkland consists of mature woodland, newly enhanced meadow grassland, ornamental shrubs and over 10,000 trees, one being over 500 years old. The site will be managed in partnership with managing partners Scofell and Brimstone Nature Conservation Contractors in line with the site management plan.

📍 **BLANDFORD WOODS** - As part of the re-development of Blandford House and Malta Barracks, Grainger Plc and the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) transferred Blandford Woods to the Land Trust in March 2024. Being a 14-hectare mixed woodland that has been unmanaged for many years, the Land Trust and its managing partner, Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership, will focus on improving the condition of the woodland and conserving species of interest including green hound's-tongue, which whilst one of the UK's rarest plants, is found in abundance across the site.

OUR SANG
PORTFOLIO:

14 sites
spanning
nearly
400
hectares



Sunningdale

New site acquisitions





Service charge sites

These sites are under the management of Land Trust Residential Services Limited and are funded mainly by the neighbouring residents:

ST JAMES' PARK - Located in the market town of Bishop's Stortford in Hertfordshire, St James' Park is a vibrant new community comprising 685 new homes. It provides a variety of community facilities, including open green spaces and recreational and play areas for the community and wildlife to benefit from. The Land Trust maintains and manages the open spaces under service charge on behalf of residents.

WOLSEY PARK - Nestled on the outskirts of Rayleigh, Wolsey Park is a 700-home development with impressive views across the countryside. The site offers the community extensive parklands, wildflower meadows, green open spaces, and recreational play areas for their enjoyment and to help enhance the site's natural biodiversity.

Number of service charge sites has steadily increased year on year:

March 2021	March 2021	March 2023	March 2024
8 sites	10 sites	12 sites	14 sites
5,251 units	5,969 units	7,387 units	8,701 units
			

OUR SERVICE CHARGE SITES:

14 sites with 8,701 units

Credit: Countryside Homes



Charitable objectives

We work with our partners to provide charitable delivery across the following areas:



Environment and biodiversity

OBJECTIVES:

By **creating, restoring and managing** green spaces to improve the natural environment through increasing biodiversity and enhancing habitats.



Education and learning

OBJECTIVES:

By **inspiring** the current and next generation through vocational outdoor education and training opportunities.



Health

OBJECTIVES:

By **promoting** the use of our green spaces for the improvement of the health and wellbeing of communities.



Economic vitality

OBJECTIVES:

By **optimising** the economic value of our spaces and the services that they can provide to benefit the communities that are connected with them.



Community cohesion

OBJECTIVES:

By **involving** local people through volunteering and use of our sites and encouraging emotional ownership.

Charitable delivery

We have seen a steady increase of 5% across charitable KPIs in 2023/24. More details on how we calculate outputs can be found below.



Environment and biodiversity

DELIVERY:

- The year saw a huge increase (114%) in the number of bioblitzes which have more than doubled since last year to 338, an average of 6.5 surveys per week – a big win for citizen science and community involvement, but also supporting improved habitat delivery.

7,476
trees
planted



Education and learning

DELIVERY:

- The Land Trust's free education programme, Green Angels, hosted 603 participants in 2023/24 - a 41% increase on the previous year. The programme has gained a glowing reputation in communities where it has been operating for some time, with many courses filling up quickly. This year also saw Green Angels being rolled out onto a service charge site, Beaulieu, for the first time.



Health

DELIVERY:

- There has been a change in the mix of health delivery with a greater focus on mental health activities, responding to increased anxiety and social isolation post-Covid. While physical health activity has reduced, mental health related activities were up 217% on last year with 2,244 visitors taking part.



Economic vitality

DELIVERY:

- Our service charge portfolio continues to deliver significant and growing amounts of charitable outcomes, releasing in the region of £4m GVA into the local economy, and delivering approximately £5.6m worth of overall economic value, which is a 35% increase on the year before. Service charge sites deliver 15% the Land Trust's charitable output, an increased share on previous years.
- Across the whole portfolio sites generated £2.1m GVA in tourism, an 18% increase on last year.
- Across the portfolio we've saved the public purse almost £3m - with £1.4m of this resulting in health savings.



Community cohesion

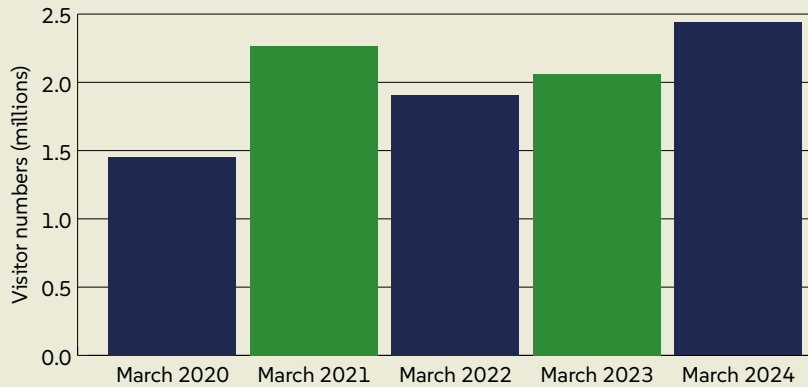
DELIVERY:

- 2023/24 saw a huge increase (34%) in volunteering across all age groups, highlighting concerted efforts to build community resilience and cohesion through collaborative, area-specific activity. There was a total of 48,499 volunteering hours in 2023/24.
- Volunteer numbers continue to grow, especially within the 25-64 age group which has increased by 48%. There was also a notable increase amongst under-25s.
- There was also a significant increase in community activities – up 40% on last year. This has been built on regular sessions (up 147% on last year), and working closely with local communities and our managing partners.
- In addition, there were 33,559 visits to one off/seasonal events, an 11% increase.
- Plus, there were 542 one-off or seasonal events: also an 11% increase year on year.

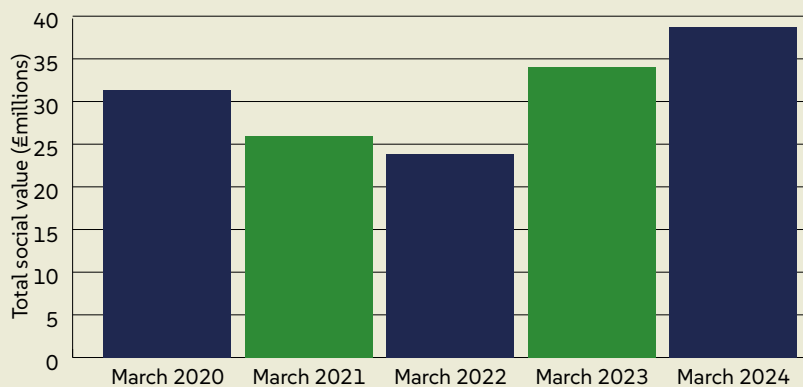
542
events

Charitable delivery

Visitor numbers to our green spaces were up 18% in 2023/24, and now exceed the Covid level peak:



The Land Trust has seen year on year growth in social value delivery - up 14% year on year:



*Figures have been rebuilding since the Covid Covid peak we experienced during the first lock down period.



Credit: Shaun Jackson

Charitable delivery

Green Angels

The Land Trust's Green Angels programme, which provides free environmental training and education, makes a huge difference to the lives of our trainees, helping many into further education and employment. It's a great way to learn new skills, meet like-minded people and make a difference to the local environment.



Green Flag

The Land Trust was awarded a total of eight Green Flag Awards across its portfolio in July 2023. Sites include: Silverdale in the West Midlands, Elba Park in Sunderland, Beam Parklands in Barking, Greenwich Peninsula Ecology Park in London, Beaulieu in Essex, Hogmoor Inclosure in Hampshire, Wellesley Woodlands in Aldershot and the Countess of Chester Country Park in Cheshire.



The Green Flag Award scheme recognises and rewards well-managed parks and green spaces, setting the benchmark standard for their management across the United Kingdom and around the world.



Measuring economic and social value

In order to measure the impact of our work, we use an Economic and Social Value Model developed in partnership with AMION Consulting. The model provides evidence-based, measurable indicators of the benefits of well-managed green space for communities, and assesses the benefits of green space against our five charitable objectives: environment and biodiversity; health and wellbeing; education; economic uplift; and community and place.

An Economic Value Assessment worksheet then summarises the benefits generated through the model, providing an overall measure of economic value. These can then be used to understand the:

- GVA (Gross Value Added) contribution
- Fiscal savings/benefits
- Wider economic or social value

Credit: Shaun Jackson



Case studies

Each year, we recognise our managing partners' hard work and dedication via the Land Trust Managing Partners Awards. This year, the awards ceremony took place in Essex, where we celebrated the charitable work delivered across the country alongside Land Trust colleagues, trustees, and our managing partners.

The following case studies were the winners of their respective categories.

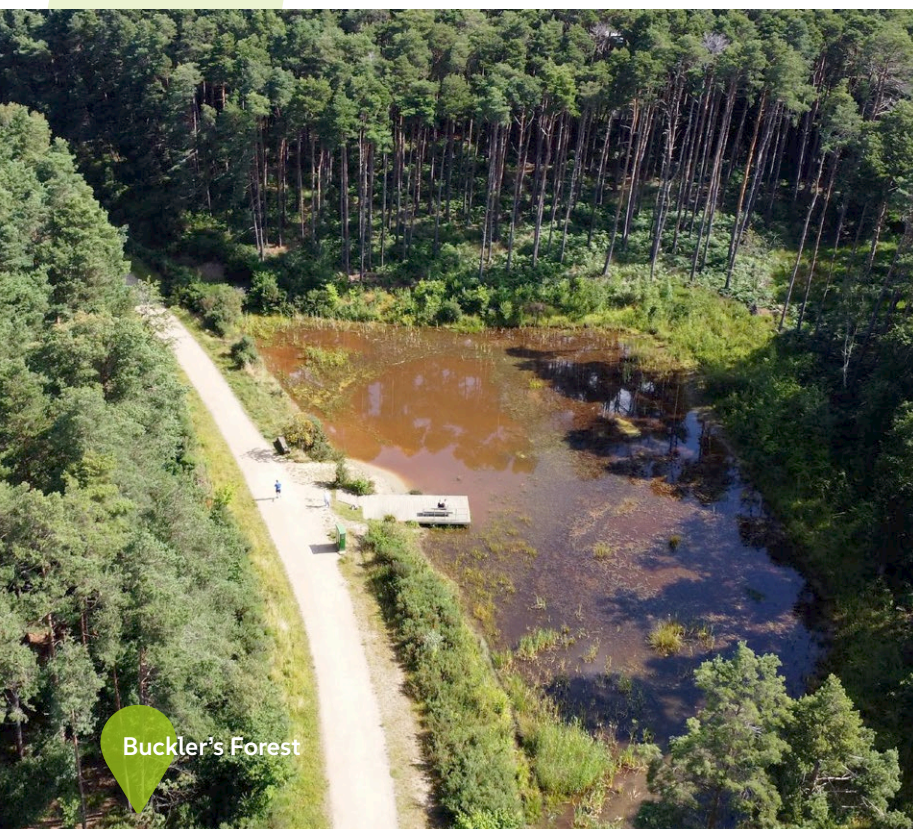




Case studies

Environment and biodiversity

JOINT WINNERS – **Buckler's Forest and Carr Lodge**



Buckler's Forest

Buckler's Forest

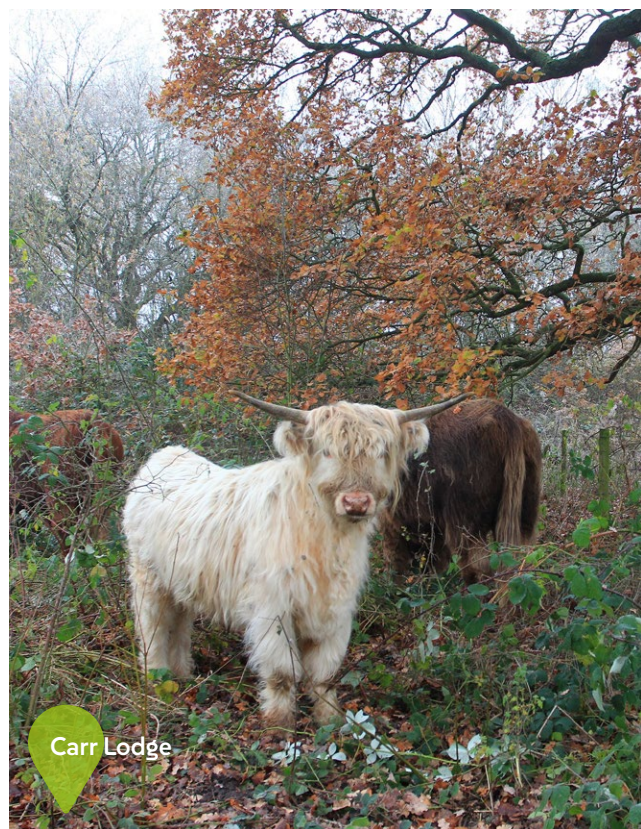
The former Transport Research Laboratory (TRL), Buckler' Forest in Berkshire, won this year's Nature Site of the Year.

The 46-hectare SANG is managed by Bracknell Forest Council, with the aims of helping support wildlife and create new habitats. Over the past year, the team has worked on managing reed beds to help the rare blue-tailed dragonfly. They have also encouraged the growth of willow, which serves as food for the purple emperor butterfly. Additionally, the team has used wildlife-friendly grass cutting methods, leaving 25% of the area for food during the winter, and created early nesting sites for woodlarks.

As well as this, bee banks were created on heathland to mine bees and grayling butterflies, a 250m boundary hedge was planted for habitat connectivity, and volunteers and corporate groups engaged on habitat tasks including invasive species removal and tree planting.

The site boasts over 60 breeding bird species, with 16 amber-listed and 10 red-listed. It also hosts rare odonata, such as the scarce blue-tailed and small red damselflies, along with rare butterflies like the purple emperor, grayling, and silver-studded blue. Additionally, various reptiles and amphibians are present, and a rare Darwin wasp species, previously only ever recorded on the island of Portland, has been recorded here.

In recognition of the evolving land management that has produced an important site for Berkshire's wildlife, Buckler's Forest was designated as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) in February 2024.



Carr Lodge

Carr Lodge

Credit: Jim Horsfall

Carr Lodge in Doncaster has seen an astonishing transformation since the Land Trust initially took the site under management in 2012.

It is now a wildlife-rich floodplain grassland, flanked by Carr woodland and scrub and lightly grazed by cattle. Over the past year, relentless wildlife recording by volunteers and managing partners Yorkshire Wildlife Trust has seen the site become a designated Local Wildlife Site by Doncaster Council.

Amongst its huge list of invertebrates, a nationally scarce beetle, a near-threatened water beetle, and a nationally scarce hoverfly are each associated with the carefully managed habitats on site. The grassland supports breeding lapwing, snipe and redshank, whilst marsh harriers regularly hunt overhead.

This is even more remarkable given Carr Lodge's highly urban nature, bordering the busy M18, the Doncaster spur road, a large business park and housing development.



Case studies

Health

Hogmoor Inclosure



Hogmoor Inclosure

Hogmoor Inclosure

Hogmoor Inclosure in Hampshire was awarded this year's Health Site of the Year Award. The local community enjoys the health benefits of this 114-hectare SANG, through a combination of third-party providers, the local managing partner, Deadwater Valley Trust, and stakeholders such as Whitehill & Bordon Community Trust.

Through 2023, 50 moderate health activities engaged 296 people. These included Tots Rambles, Ready, Steady Mum's Walks, and guided and sponsored walks, such as the "Walk for Peace" organised by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association.

123 vigorous health activities positively impacted over 18,000 people, including a weekly park run for adults and juniors, boot camps, orienteering courses, school cross-country runs, and even a Halloween run. Nine events throughout the year offered conservation tasks to assist individuals with mental health-related issues and a newly launched series of nature-based therapeutic walks.



Credit: Shaun Jackson

123 vigorous health activities positively impacted over 18,000 people



Case studies

Economic vitality

JOINT WINNERS – Silverdale and Beaulieu



Beaulieu

Beaulieu in Essex is a development of over 1,600 homes. The site has been involved with the Chelmsford City Council's Play in the Park initiative, which is aimed at children aged 3-12 to help get them active. Activities include football skills, circus skills, bouncy castle and parkour, as well as local business available for refreshments.

The site has also hosted two Green Angels courses, in partnership with Essex Wildlife Trust.

A number of groups use the area including running groups and clubs and the Heart and Sole Walking Group (Chelmsford City Council initiative), which meets at the community centre every Friday for a circular walk through Beaulieu.

Plant Style, the contractor on site, has an apprentice who works at the site and is looking to expand their apprenticeships scheme across the company.



Credit: Angela Hall

Silverdale

Silverdale Country Park, a former colliery site in Newcastle-under-Lyme, contributed significantly to the local economy in 2023/24.

The site supports the Midlands Coppicing Cooperative's creation of diverse areas of alder and hazel coppice, demonstrating a circular economy and sustainability by growing and harvesting alder and hazel stems to use onsite as hedge laying rather than paying for tantalised stakes imported from Scandinavia.

During 2023/24, £11,230 was spent on local contractors and supplies to lay 60 tonnes of stone to create new surfaced paths for accessibility, improve emergency vehicle access, and create new seasonal pools with scrapes to aid waders and amphibians.

The park's profile has also been boosted by appearing on BBC The One Show in October 2023, with photos of our volunteers working on Silverdale Country Park shown on national TV, as well as in the RHS Magazine, through being involved in Newcastle-under-Lyme's Britain in Bloom bid, securing the outright National Britain in Bloom winner's award.



Case studies

Community cohesion

Northumberlandia

Credit: Valerie Winter



Northumberlandia

Northumberlandia

The managing partners at Northumberlandia, Northumberland Wildlife Trust, has organised a wide variety of community events throughout the year, including Easter Trails, Wild Wings summer activities, Mystical Autumn Stories, Christmas crafts, and Festive Snowflake Trails, to name a few. The site also hosted food and craft markets and two Shakespearean theatre productions.

Over 6,000 people attended these large-scale events and 2,500 attended the seasonal events. In addition, volunteers from the local community participated in 250 regular sessions and nearly 30 practical tasks.

The Lady of the North even had a couple renew their vows on site this year, demonstrating just how important this site is to the local community.



Over 6,000 people attended these large-scale events...



Case studies

Education and learning

Wellesley Woodland



Wellesley Woodland

Through 2023/24, The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) have been building links with the army, local schools, nurseries, museums, and an outdoor education centre to connect children with nature at the 110-hectare former MoD, Wellesley Woodland.

The team successfully bid for a new nature intern who had the opportunity to develop their conservation skills in a full-time role for one year. Following this experience, they gained a paid position in the sustainability sector.

Regular forest school sessions encouraged children to form a community and learn about themselves through play and skill development. Beaver groups also often visit to learn more about wildlife.

Managing Partners, Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership, has provided training for three students in using machinery and hand tools, along with other local and corporate volunteers, while five student filmmakers gained creative skills through the use of the woods.

In total, 42 people participated throughout the year in Green Angels' free training courses, which included beekeeping sessions, hedge laying, willow weaving, and pond creation.



42 people participated throughout the year in Green Angels' free training courses

Summary financial information

Income and endowments from:	YEAR ENDED 31/03/2024 £000's	YEAR ENDED 31/03/2023 £000's
Donations and legacies	5	1
Charitable activities	2,126	1,671
Other trading activities	1,040	815
Site funding	7,131	1,789
Investments	7,384	6,769
Total income	17,686	11,045

Expenditure on:		
Investment management fees	626	618
Charitable activities	9,787	8,556
Total expenditure	10,413	9,174

Net Gains/ (Losses) on Investments	11,655	(11,461)
Corporation Tax	-	-

Net income/(Expenditure)	18,928	(9,590)
---------------------------------	---------------	----------------

Net movement in funds	18,928	(9,590)
-----------------------	--------	---------

Funds of the Group	YEAR ENDED 31/03/24 £000's	YEAR ENDED 31/03/2023 £000's
Endowment Funds	95,568	86,897
Restricted Funds	93,214	95,212
General Funds	3,447	3,743
Designated Funds	30,023	17,472
Total Funds	222,252	203,324

Summary financial information

A selection of the grants awarded:

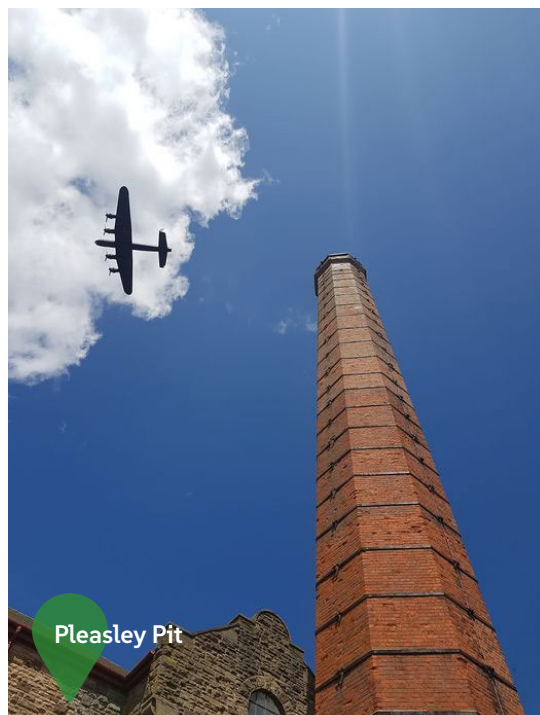
A total of £1.3m was raised through fundraising activities in 2023/24, with a number of projects underway across Land Trust sites this year, thanks to grants and other charitable donations.

A grant of £127k from Biffa Award is part of a larger grant across two years to repair and strengthen the chimney and other building structures that are part of the Scheduled Ancient Monument at Pleasley Pit. The grant will also develop a range of interactive interpretation about the history of Pleasley Pit and coal mining. This funding will help to protect this important site for the future and provide new ways to engage communities and visitors with its fascinating history.

The Land Trust also received £107K from National Highways via their Designated Funds programme to undertake feasibility works to assess the potential for biodiversity enhancements to be undertaken on six Land Trust sites in Yorkshire and the North East.

All of the above is in addition to Basic Payment Scheme income of £88k.

Supported By:	Site/Project	£000s
Biffa Award	Pleasley	£127
National Highways	Northeast & Yorkshire	£107
Basic Payment Scheme	n/a	£88
Woodland Management & Higher-Level Stewardship Grants	n/a	£26
Historic England	Pleasley	£20
Northumbrian Water Limited	Monkton	£10
Miscellaneous	n/a	£3



Thank you

Members

We would like to offer our thanks to our Members. Their counsel and advice continues to be incredibly valuable to the organisation.

- Homes England
- Woodland Trust
- The King's Foundation
- The Wildlife Trust
- National Trust
- Town and Country Planning Association
- Groundwork
- TCV

Trustees

The Land Trust's Board of Trustees play an invaluable part in supporting the success of Trust throughout the year and we would like to offer our heartfelt appreciation to our Board for their continued guidance and expertise.

- Professor Janet Dugdale (Chair)
- Anthony Bickmore
- Patrick Aylmer
- Tom Keevil
- Dr Louise Brooke-Smith
- Jonathan Irvine
- Dr Nick Taylor-Buck
- Deborah Rees
- Sandra Kelly
- Rachel Hatfield (appointed 1 July 2023)
- Sarah Chare (appointed 1 July 2023)
- Tom Wright, CBE (appointed 1 July 2023)
- Simon Rutman (appointed 1 July 2023)
- Michael Bishop (appointed 1 December 2023)
- William Hiscocks (retired 6 December 2023)
- Nicholas McLeod-Clarke (resigned 5 July 2023)

For more information on each of our trustees, please see the Land Trust website for full bios.

Managing partners, volunteers and friends of groups

Our sincere thanks also go to our managing partners and other strategic partners. Without their invaluable contribution, the Trust would simply be unable to deliver all of its outstanding achievements. In addition we would also like to thank the volunteers and friends of groups who so generously give their time and energy to improve our green spaces.

Colleagues

Last but not least, thanks must also go to the Land Trust colleagues for their continued hard work and commitment. The Land Trust culture is built upon respect, collaboration, responsibility, inspiration, ambition and agility. It is these values which ensure that together, we deliver for both the environment and for communities, and, in turn, continue to change lives for the better.



**The
Land Trust**

7 Birchwood One, Dewhurst Road, Warrington WA3 7GB
01925 852005 www.thelandtrust.org.uk enquiries@thelandtrust.org.uk

Registered Charity No. 1138337

Credit: Sue Billcliffe