



Ecological Continuity Trust

Trustees' Report and Financial Statements 1st January 2021 to 31st December 2021.

Company Number: 6652160

Charity Number: 1126122

Ecological Continuity Trust

Contents

	Page
Trustees' Report	3
Financial Review	15
Independent Examiner's Report	16
Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Information	17
Financial Statement and Balance Sheet	20

Ecological Continuity Trust

Trustees' Report

The Ecological Continuity Trust

The Ecological Continuity Trust is the only organisation working to safeguard the future of the UK's strategic network of long-term ecological experiments (LTEs). Many ecological processes operate over timescales of decades. As the effects of environmental change on ecosystems are often slow to emerge, long-term studies are essential to characterise and understand these changes.

LTEs involve experimental manipulation combined with monitoring and these have been the focus of the ECT during its first thirteen years. LTEs provide greater insight into how ecosystems are likely to respond to environmental changes than monitoring alone. An experimental approach allows researchers to investigate cause and effect, to test the effectiveness of management regimes and to manipulate environmental variables beyond those currently prevailing, allowing the investigation of future scenarios. Long-term ecological experiments provide a unique platform for such studies, investigating the effects of, and interactions between environmental changes, such as air pollution, grazing management and climate change on ecosystems. LTEs allow us to understand and predict future scenarios for ecosystems in the face of environmental change. The role that LTEs play in enabling society to understand and mitigate where possible, the consequences of climate change on ecosystems is now more important than ever.

During 2021 the ECT expanded its remit to include support for some long-term monitoring studies (LTMs) that are associated with existing LTEs. The rationale for this expansion of ECT's remit and vision was fourfold:

1. Evidence that LTM studies, such as those included within the UK Environmental Change Network, are increasingly threatened with funding cuts and staffing shortages in the same way that LTEs were in 2008, when the ECT was established.
2. LTMs such as the Environmental Change Network sites that are associated with existing LTEs have the potential to add significant scale values to the scientific outputs of the latter.
3. The creation of LTE/LTM research 'hubs' around existing LTEs should increase their research, education and societal outreach value and thus broaden the User Group community.
4. Inclusion of LTM studies should broaden ECT's interest and appeal to the wider public, both in terms of its science content and its status as a charity requiring funds and donations.

In 2020, ECT published its first Corporate Plan '*Securing Long-term Experiments for the Future*', which sets out a strategic framework for our activities and operations for the next decade 2020-2030. The Plan is available from ECT's website at: <https://www.ecologicalcontinuitytrust.org/strategy>

Ecological Continuity Trust

Overall Purpose

To ensure that the ecological evidence available to inform land management decisions is supported by studies that are conducted over a long enough time to:

- include representative and extreme weather conditions;
- allow for ecological processes that operate slowly - sometimes over decades;
- capture infrequent stochastic events such as epidemic disease or severe drought.

The following are **Specific Objectives of the ECT**

1. Supporting existing long-term experimental platforms and new research initiatives that make use of these platforms;
2. Growing ECT's register of long-term experimental platforms as previously unknown LTEs emerge into view;
3. Facilitating the establishment of new LTEs and LTE/LTM research hubs where the scientific need is identified and enabling their use by a wide variety of researchers;
4. Establishing a new register of long-term monitoring studies (LTMs) that add scale value to existing LTEs and supporting those studies in a similar way to LTEs;
5. Building a network of LTE/LTM users and stakeholders (the User Group) to promote and integrate knowledge exchange and innovative scientific and practical outputs from LTEs/LTMs;
6. Helping to place experimental ecology at the heart of evidence-based policymaking and sustainable land use, leading to environmental and social well-being;
7. Communicating the science and impact of LTEs/LTMs to a wide audience of stakeholders beyond the ecological research community.

The ECT's Key Roles

1. **Finance** – brokering major funding, especially for new experimental facilities; providing a stop-gap in emergencies for existing LTEs/LTMs, and funding small research projects, data curation and essential maintenance/repair work;
2. **Advocacy and Engagement With Science Policy** - championing the case for LTEs/LTMs in the ecological research community, with Government/Research Councils and within host institutions; building partnerships with organisations in the scientific and conservation sectors, to help put experimental ecology at the heart of evidence-

Ecological Continuity Trust

- based policymaking, sustainable land management and education;
3. **Moral Support** – supporting researchers and trying to ensure continuity of leadership and institutional support for existing LTEs/LTMs; providing a web-based resource promoting our sites for use as *research platforms* by the wider community;
 4. **Intellectual** – identifying research gaps in the LTE network and advocating the filling of these gaps and that the suite of existing LTEs as a whole is greater than the sum of the parts; maintaining a network of key stakeholders;
 5. **Communication** – explaining the science and impact of LTEs/LTMs by harnessing new digital technologies such as webinars and virtual reality, and developing impact case studies.

Activities and Achievements - How the Public Benefitted

The Trustees have complied with the duty in section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to public benefit guidance published by the Commission. In 2021, our activities to forward our public benefit were as follows:

- The ECT's primary mission to safeguard and support LTEs remains unchanged but has now been supplemented by objectives around the safeguarding of certain types of professional LTM studies. The ECT's 10-year Corporate Plan for the current decade 2020-2030 outlines the development of our science communication activities, which aim to showcase the importance and value of long-term field ecology to society. The way ECT has approached its science communication activities has been modified during the coronavirus pandemic to focus more on digital technologies. The appointment of ECT's first ever dedicated Communications Officer in February 2021 has been a milestone in our communications activity, details of which will be presented later in this report.
- ECT's impact as an organisation has seen a step change in the recognition of our relevance and importance during 2021. This has been achieved through our development of several new strategic partnerships, including with the National Biodiversity Network, the Sustainable Soils Alliance, the Royal Society of Biology, Natural England, CIEEM and, most recently, the British Society of Soil Science. Through the latter partnership, ECT gained communications access to COP26 in Glasgow, enabling us to showcase online to a large audience how relevant LTEs on our register contribute to our understanding and potential mitigation of the long-term effects of climate change on ecosystems.
- Partnerships have led to the Trust co-hosting the following significant events in 2021:

Ecological Continuity Trust

- CIEEM/ECT Joint Spring Conference on LTEs, held 16 March online;
 - CIEEM/ECT joint webinar on Biodiversity Net Gain, held 21 July online;
 - AFBI/ECT 50th anniversary celebration for the Hillsborough long-term grassland experiment, held on site 16 September in person.
- The impacts of the science being conducted on the LTEs on ECT's national register continue to be realised mainly within the scientific community, but also socially through inputs to policymaking and decision-making around land use and biodiversity improvement. Economic impacts are much harder to assess and quantify for LTEs, but the ECT has commenced a piece of work with an environmental economist at NatureScot to try to interpret economic impacts as potential cost savings to government and other landowners in taking preventive action informed by LTEs as opposed to dealing with the economic consequences of maintaining the status quo (or taking the wrong action). A good example would be the BangorDIVERSE LTE at Bangor in North Wales, which has impacts in natural flood management through the planting of different species of deciduous trees in different densities and arrangements to understand better their effects upon soil hydrological processes.
 - New long-term experiments are being added to ECT's national register every year. **Three** were added in 2021 as follows:
 - The Llyn Brianne Stream Observatory LTE located in the Cambrian Mountains of mid-Wales and managed by Steve Ormerod (Cardiff University), the first *freshwater* experiment to be added to our register – running since 1981;
 - The Moor House Grazing Enclosures LTE located in the northern Pennines in Upper Teesdale and managed by Rob Marrs (University of Liverpool) – running since 1953;
 - The Plynlimon Catchments LTE located in Wales in the headwaters of the Severn and Wye rivers and managed by Bridget Emmett (Centre for Ecology and Hydrology) – running since 1968.
 - The ECT now supports **36** currently active LTEs across all four nations of the UK. The overall annual usage of LTEs for both research and educational purposes is estimated to be at least 1500 individuals, including 73 early-career researchers and 338 PhD, Masters and undergraduate student projects collectively. LTEs clearly provide a valuable and well-used resource for the UK's ecological community. Relatively few LTEs utilise volunteers at the present time but those that do, do so on a regular basis and are often sited on NNR land owned by Natural England. ECT itself is in the process of building its own 'Volunteer Pool' to help provide an additional resource to LTEs where it may be needed, for example for site maintenance days. Data from LTEs

Ecological Continuity Trust

in several cases is deposited in international databases, which adds to the wider 'remote' usage of these important experiments.

- The LTEs on ECT's register have an impressive record of scientific publications on an annual basis. Comprehensive bibliographies are maintained on the individual webpages for each LTE on our register. For example, the Llyn Brienne freshwater stream catchments LTE in the Cambrian Mountains in Wales has produced over 100 scientific papers during its 40-year existence. In 2021, key publications emerged from the Wardlow Hay Cop LTE in Derbyshire and the BIFoR-FACE elevated CO₂ experiment in mature oak woodland in Staffordshire. For the latter, the publication in *Tree Physiology* reported the first major results from the experiment, indicating that given adequate nutrients, mature oak trees will continue to enhance their carbon assimilation under elevated CO₂ treatments. This publication led to numerous online and broadcast media activities during October, for example *BBC Midlands Today*, involving post-doctoral researcher Anna Gardner (University of Birmingham).
- The LTE User Group, which comprises academic ecologists, research students, policy makers, ecological consultants, environmental non-governmental organisations, landowners and industry grew consistently during 2021 to **210** members at the close of the year. This represents a 20% growth in membership on the previous year.
- A survey of the vulnerabilities of all 36 currently active LTEs on ECT's register was completed this year. Seven were identified to be at risk of ceasing to be functional through, for example, lack of research funding or declining use. ECT's Executive Director initiated dialogue with PIs to begin to address issues within our power to influence.
- ECT launched its **first three** new *research 'hubs'* which link up long-term monitoring studies (LTMs) with existing LTEs on our national register. The new hubs are built around the MOORCO experiment in Glensaugh, Scotland; the Park Grass experiment in Hertfordshire; and the North Wyke Farm Platform in Devon. They will be featured in a brand-new section of our website currently under development.
- The ECT continues to break new ground in its activities, awarding more Small Grants to ecologists in 2021 than in any year previously. The following seven grants were awarded across the year:
 - Dr Kris Hart (University of Birmingham) was awarded a grant of £2000 towards the costs of processing tree leaf samples from the BIFoR-FACE experiment that require careful preparation and curation to guarantee their long-term storage for future analysis;
 - Katy Faulkner (University of Warwick) was awarded a grant of £2000 towards the costs of consumables and travel for a PhD project investigating microbial carbon cycling at the BIFoR-FACE experiment;

Ecological Continuity Trust

- Dr Jill Kowal (Royal Botanic Gardens Kew) was awarded £3000 towards the renewal of Thursley Common LTE in Surrey. A new team is measuring the ability of heathland vegetation and belowground mycorrhizal fungal communities to recover 10 years after persistent elevated nitrogen treatments, with a view to examining the influences of past treatments on ecosystem carbon sequestration;
 - Dr Josep Barba (University of Birmingham) was awarded £1914 towards field consumables for work at the BIFoR-FACE experiment in Staffordshire looking at how future atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations affect tree stem carbon dioxide and methane fluxes in mature oak woodland;
 - Dr Caroline Meharg (Queen's University Belfast) was awarded a grant of £3000 towards the costs of surveying the soil rhizosphere microbes at the Hillsborough LTE in Northern Ireland. This study will provide insights into impacts of soil management on microbial biodiversity and how this integrates with soil chemistry to drive competition in grassland pastures;
 - Dr Jonathan Holland (Agri-food and Biosciences Institute, NI) was awarded £1020 towards the costs of co-hosting (with ECT) the 50th anniversary event for the Hillsborough long-term nutrient addition experiment in Northern Ireland;
 - Professor David Gowing (Open University) was awarded a special data curation grant of £5272 for vital work to secure the long-term survey data from the Somerford Mead LTE in Oxfordshire. The data will be deposited in NERC's Environmental Information Data Centre and so available to all.
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- ECT continues to be a pioneer (in the UK) of the use of virtual reality (VR) to communicate the science behind LTEs. Our second VR headset experience was completed this year for the Whim Bog LTE located in the Scottish Borders, and was made available to the public for the first time at a major conference in December (see below);
 - ECT participated in the British Ecological Society's (BES) *Ecology Across the Borders* Conference in Liverpool held 12-15 December 2021. Despite pandemic constraints on "in-person" attendance, the Trust's exhibition stand received a good level of interest with many new members joining the LTE User Group and signing up to receive the ECT Newsletter. Stringent biosecurity measures were in place to enable several conference delegates to view the new VR experience of the Whim Bog LTE. The response of the viewers was enthusiastic and highly positive.

Ecological Continuity Trust

- In association with ECT, the University of Oxford published a video on the RainDrop experiment as part of its on-going *Laboratory With Leaves* series. Titled '[The Climate Machine](#)', the video features Andy Hector and Sara Middleton explaining the importance of this LTE to science and society.
- The Trust's Executive Director Ben Sykes contributed the following ECT-authored articles for each publication of the BES's quarterly members magazine *The Niche* in 2021:
 - *LTEs and Urban Horticulture – a Missing Link?* by Ken Thompson (March issue);
 - *Building Collaborative Links Between LTEs and Monitoring* (June issue);
 - *Breathing New Life Into Long-term Ecological Experiments* (September issue);
 - *Expanding the UK's Network of Long-term Ecological Experiments* (December issue).
- A further article referencing the Trust was published by David Wilkinson (University of Lincoln) in *British Wildlife* in August 2021 titled '*Peering Into the Future With Help From the Past – the Importance of Long-term Ecological Studies*'.
- ECT produced a quarterly newsletter throughout 2021 as previously, in March, June, September and December. All issues can be viewed on the ECT's website at:
<https://www.ecologicalcontinuitytrust.org/newsletter-archive>.
- The following podcast interviews were carried out in 2021, which are available for listening from the ECT website at:
<https://www.ecologicalcontinuitytrust.org/podcasts>.
 - Steve Ormerod of Cardiff University at the Llyn Brienne Stream Observatory in the Cambrian Mountains of mid-Wales (November 2021);
 - Raj Whitlock of the University of Liverpool at the Buxton Climate Change Impacts Laboratory (BCCIL) in Derbyshire (July 2021);
 - Richard Bardgett of the University of Manchester at the Colt Park Meadows long-term grassland restoration experiment in North Yorkshire (July 2021);
 - Jill Kowal of Royal Botanic Gardens Kew at the Thursley Common nitrogen deposition experiment in Surrey (June 2021);
 - Andy Smith of Bangor University in North Wales at the BangorDIVERSE long-term deciduous woodland experiment at Henfaes (June 2021);
 - Dario Fornara of the Agri-Food & Biosciences Institute (AFBI) in Northern Ireland at the Hillsborough long-term grassland experiment (May 2021).

Ecological Continuity Trust

- The Trust hosted the following series of six webinars in 2021, which proved popular and attracted several new members to join our core audience. Recordings of all these webinars can be viewed on ECT's YouTube channel at:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjcaas_6y9rD0lulNsxGEXw
 - Ken Thompson, University of Sheffield
"Long-term Experiments & Urban Horticulture - A Missing Link?" (29 January 2021)
 - Martin Lester, National Trust Wicken Fen
"Long-term Ecological Field Research at the National Trust's Wicken Fen" (30 March 2021)
 - Lisa Chilton, NBN Trust
"The Work of the National Biodiversity Network" (19 May 2021)
 - Jason Reeves, CIEEM
"The Role & Activities of the Chartered Institute of Ecology & Environmental Management" (21 July 2021)
 - Gareth Clay, University of Manchester
"Linking up Long-term Ecological Experiments with Wildfire Research" (17 September 2021)
 - Simon Peacock, Newcastle University
"More Than a Century of Grassland Research at Palace Leas Experiment" (26 November 2021)
- New webpages were published in 2021 for the following LTEs on our register: Newborough Warren and Colt Park Meadows.
- The Trust's social media following increased significantly during 2021 as we continued to broaden our audience and appeal. New platforms were established including Instagram and LinkedIn, and these have led to a steady increase in all our digital audiences as follows:
 - Twitter followers reached 1475, a 33% increase on the previous reporting year;
 - YouTube subscribers reached 42, a 282% increase on the previous reporting year;
 - LinkedIn followers reached 120 from new;
 - Instagram followers reached 124 from new.

Ecological Continuity Trust

Funding and Staff

The British Ecological Society (BES) supported the ECT with a grant of £25,000 in 2021. Continued funding support by the BES is a very positive endorsement of the value and credibility of the ECT and has provided vital leverage in securing additional core funds from other external foundations. Other funds received in 2021 included: £25,000 from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, £30,356 in private donations, £5044 from the Grit Howe Charitable Trust and £50 via the AmazonSmile Foundation.

Obtaining project funding is crucial to the support of ECT's Small Grants Scheme. Several external funders consider this an ineligible use of their grant funds and it is therefore very difficult to secure funding for this purpose, even though ecologists consider this to be one of the most important things that the Trust does for them. This is reflected in our 2021 grants budget being fully committed, with £20k awarded across seven grantees. It is probable therefore, that post-pandemic demand for the ECT's grants will outstrip the availability of funds in the coming years.

It remains challenging for ECT to project income any further than 3-4 years into the future, largely because the Trust is entirely dependent upon two income streams – competitively-won grant funding and private donations. However, we now have a much clearer view of the annual income ECT requires to sustain and steadily grow its current capacity. This is between £100-£150kpa.

ECT's Executive Director, Ben Sykes, moved to full-time working for the Trust from January 2021. Under his Direction the ECT's administration ran smoothly and efficiently throughout 2021 despite constraints imposed by covid restrictions on site visits and face-to-face meetings. A significant amount of the Director's time was, however, taken up with preparing bids for potential funding organisations. The time consumed by the continuing search for potential funders and preparing bids means that some engagement initiatives by the Director had to be postponed into 2022. The appointment of ECT's first ever dedicated Communications Officer (Danae Dodge) in February 2021 has significantly helped with administrative work such as updating the Trust's website, preparing our quarterly newsletter and managing our social media channels. The Communications Officer appointment has resulted in a considerable boost to our audiences and followers using various digital platforms.

The effects of the coronavirus pandemic on the functioning of the ECT were not significant in 2021. With a previous long-standing commitment to home-working and online meetings (for cost and environmental reasons), ECT staff and trustees continued working normally for the most part throughout 2021.

Volunteers

Volunteers are an integral part of ECT's ability to sustain the 36 currently active LTEs now on its register. Where LTEs struggle for funding, both tenured and retired ecological researchers volunteer their time to keep treatments going and

Ecological Continuity Trust

analyse data, often drawing in undergraduate and postgraduate students to assist in the overall running of experiments.

ECT also engages members of the public as volunteers from time-to-time when the need arises. In 2021, the Trust began recruiting a 'Volunteer Pool' to support relevant engagement activities at LTEs, such as maintenance days. By the end of the year, the Pool comprised 11 volunteers. Such activity is driven by arising need rather than by design each year, and ECT is always vigilant for such opportunities. In some rare cases, it is also possible for ECT to engage volunteers in botanical surveys at LTEs, though this requires specialist skills and is dependent upon the availability of those skills in any given locality.

Constraints imposed by the coronavirus pandemic made volunteer activity difficult or impossible to arrange at many LTEs throughout 2021.

ECT's LTE User Group continues to be chaired by a volunteering Trustee.

Governance

Full Board of Trustees meetings took place quarterly in January, April, July and October in 2021, with our Annual General Meeting taking place alongside the July gathering. The Board's remit is to focus on strategic issues. Stewart Clark (National Trust) was welcomed to the ECT Board as the BES representative in January 2021 and, in July 2021, the Board also welcomed Professor Jeff Duckett (Queen Mary University of London) as the Trust's new Honorary Treasurer and member of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee now comprises ECT's Chairman, Deputy Chairman, Honorary Treasurer, Honorary Secretary and Executive Director, and continued to meet monthly throughout 2021, overseeing the day-to-day and month-to-month operations of the Trust. On behalf of the Executive Committee, the Director reported to the Board at its four quarterly meetings in 2021.

ECT implemented four new corporate policies in 2021 on Grievance, Homeworking, Expenses and Data Protection. All our policies are available to view on request.

Plans for the Future

The appointment of a part-time (0.5FTE) Communications Officer in 2021 on a two-year contract allows the ECT to grow its outreach and engagement capacity significantly during 2022 and beyond. This will enable its Executive Director to allocate more time to building strategic relationships with key organisations, engaging in further advocacy activities with policymakers and continuing our ongoing fundraising campaign. Subject to the availability of funds, the Trust will be looking to extend the Communications Officer's contract and hours of work.

ECT will build upon the recent expansion of its remit by facilitating further

Ecological Continuity Trust

research ‘hubs’ which integrate appropriate long-term monitoring studies (LTMs) with existing LTEs on ECT’s register. Depending upon funding availability, grant resources will remain focused on LTEs, but also on supporting LTE/LTM research hubs.

Considering the review of the vulnerability of the 36 currently active LTEs on our register, the ECT will prioritise necessary future interventions to safeguard at risk sites.

ECT’s current fundraising campaign will continue throughout 2022, focused initially on securing a major core funding contribution from the John Ellerman Foundation. We will also target significant project-based funding to boost ECT’s Continuity Fund for small grants. We will explore the possibility of appointing a part-time dedicated fundraiser to increase the volume of grant applications that we are able to prepare and submit.

The Trust will seek to partner with the British Society of Soil Science to hold a national/international, in-person conference in 2022 that will engage the soil science community in making more use of LTE sites on our national register.

ECT will continue to build upon its pioneering work with Virtual Reality (VR) to plan a third new VR headset experience for a selected LTE in late 2022.

We will continue to grow our ‘Volunteer Pool’ from its current 11 members, so that ECT has a human resource available which may be drawn upon to assist with free maintenance work at any of the LTEs on our register.

The Trust will work towards conducting at least one ‘citizen science initiative’ at a suitable LTE (or LTEs) in 2022. We have begun work partnering with academic PIs at selected LTEs to begin framing appropriate activities that can be conducted by ‘laypersons’ with minimal training.

Subject to the lifting of pandemic restrictions, ECT will look to hold at least one ‘Open Day’ for members of the public at a strategic LTE within our network.

Subject to available funds, the Trust will produce a series of infographics highlighting the value and impacts of LTEs.

The ECT will continue to collaborate with NERC’s Environmental Information Data Centre (EIDC) based in Lancaster to curate and secure the data from LTEs.

The Trust will look to resume momentum in the building of new strategic relationships with relevant land management organisations, where impetus was lost due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Support for existing and new LTEs will remain a core activity of the ECT. Any

Ecological Continuity Trust

'new' unregistered LTEs to emerge into view in 2022 will be reviewed using the ECT's established criteria for registration. Once registered, 'new' LTEs will become eligible for our small grants scheme and benefit from, amongst other things, ECT's free profile-raising activities.

Promotion of the value of LTEs/LTMs to stakeholders and wider society will continue to be a key objective of the Executive Director, who will also work to continue expanding our LTE User Group. A close working relationship with the BES will continue to be maintained through two-monthly meetings, helping to facilitate ECT communications with the wider ecological community. The ECT will work closely with the BES, universities and research institutes to ensure that both the research and the educational potential of the UK's LTEs is realised.

Jeremy R.B. Tallwin

Chair of Trustees

20 July 2022

Jeremy R.B. Tallwin

Ecological Continuity Trust

Financial Review

Financial Position

On 31st December 2021, ECT had funds of £88,327 comprised of £42,971 unrestricted and £45,356 restricted. Expenditure during the year was £76,209 (or £119,386 when in kind expenditure is included) and income £46,208 (or £89,385 when in kind income is included). The ECT remains a going concern.

ECT is in a strong position to continue to be a catalyst and co-ordinating organisation that has a much bigger impact than its turnover suggests. We can identify other activities that we have enabled partner organisations to deliver, but we do not know the attendant costs (note 5 to the accounts).

Reserves

The Trustees have agreed a policy that 3 months operating reserve is desirable. Current unrestricted funds are larger than required to satisfy this, but our fundraising is extremely dependent on occasional relatively large donations and longer cover is highly desirable for stability and continuity of service.

Exemption from Audit

For the period ending 31/12/2021, the company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies. The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476. The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and the preparation of accounts. These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime.

Independent Examiner

The trustees have appointed Certax Accounting to carry out the examination of these accounts. The trustees recommend that Certax Accounting remain in office until further notice.

Jeffrey Duckett
(Hon. Treasurer)

22 September 2022



Ecological Continuity Trust

Independent Examiner's Report

to the trustee on the unaudited financial statements of the Ecological Continuity Trust

We report on the financial statements of the Ecological Continuity trust for the year ended 31st December 2021 which comprise financial activities, the balance sheet and the related notes.


Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner: As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts, you consider that the audit requirement of section 43(2) of the Charities Act 1993 (the Act) does not apply. It is our responsibility to state, on the basis of procedures specified in the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners under section 43(7)9b) of the Act, whether particular matters have come to our attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report: Our examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission and in accordance with the provisions in part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently we do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

Independent examiner's statement: In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31 December 2021 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 and the Statement of Recommended Practice for charities.

Simon Oakland
CerTax Accounting
Independent Scrutineer


21.09.2022

Ecological Continuity Trust

Legal & Administrative Matters

Trustees/Company Directors – serving during the report period

Jeremy Tallwin (Chair)
Robin Buxton (Secretary)
Jonathan Silvertown
Keith Goulding
Carly Stevens
Alison Birkett
Kadmiel Maseyk
Charles Holt
Bridget Emmett
Kenneth Thompson
David Stone
Stewart Clarke
Jeffrey Duckett (Treasurer) – took office from 22nd July 2021

Executive Director – Ben Sykes appointed 1st March 2018
Charity number (registered 1st October 2008): 1126122
Company number (registered 21st July 2008): 6652160
Registered Office: Manor House, Little Wittenham, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RA
Independent Examiner: Certax Accounting, Little Sturt, Oxford Road, Burford, Oxfordshire OX18 4ET
Bank: CAF Bank, West Malling, Kent ME19 4JQ
Contact: Dr Robin Buxton, Manor House, Little Wittenham, Abingdon, OX14 4RA
Number of employees: 2
Website: www.ecologicalcontinuitytrust.org

Structure, Governance and Management

The Ecological Continuity Trust (ECT) is incorporated as a company limited by guarantee and governed by Memorandum and Articles.

The Board of Trustees

The trustees were appointed for their relevant leadership, ecological knowledge, charity governance and administrative experience. They met four times during the period of this report. Further trustees will be appointed as the charity develops and requires contributions to its governance by people with other skills, networks and experience. They will be given appropriate induction and information about the role of trustees and their responsibilities under the Charities Acts. The development of the Board of Trustees is seen as an ongoing process and an induction process is used with new trustees. The ECT's Board of Trustees reflects broad representation by stakeholders in the ECT's objectives.

Ecological Continuity Trust

Trustee Remuneration and Expenses

None of the trustees received any remuneration or benefits from the charity or any related entity. The charity has a policy of meeting trustees' and other volunteers' travel expenses incurred in carrying out their duties. Five trustees claimed travel expenses during the reporting period and the Treasurer used personal accounts to pay various costs and was reimbursed.

Related Parties

Robin Buxton is a trustee of the Patsy Wood Trust, the Grit Howe Charitable Trust and The Sylva Foundation. Stewart Clarke is a trustee of British Ecological Society, which gives grants to ECT. Carly Stevens is an employee of Lancaster University which has received grants from ECT. No trustee, their family, or any organisation they are associated with has benefitted financially from the ECT.

Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

Charity law requires trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity at the year end and of its incoming resources and resources expended during that year. In preparing those financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed subject to any 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 charity will continue in business

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records, which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The Trustees have considered the fundraising standards and regulations contained in *The Charities (Protection and Social Investment) Act 2016* and confirm that the Charity has complied with its requirements.

The Trustees have all confirmed in writing that they are not disqualified from acting as trustees.

The Trustees have reviewed the charity's processes for holding and managing personal data and are confident that they have done everything in their power to comply with GDPR.

Ecological Continuity Trust

Accountant's Fees: for conducting independent scrutiny of accounts and related submissions - £840 an increase of £600 due to HMRC demands for a series of Corporation Tax returns. The Trustees could not have foreseen these retrospective demands none of which resulted in a liability for tax.

Risks to the Charity

The Trustees considered the risks to the charity during the course of the year and took appropriate steps to mitigate them as far as possible. The British Ecological Society's support provides endorsement of ECT's reputation and the value of its work, giving confidence to other funders. As *the* champion of long-term ecological experiments, persistence is one of our goals and our modest funds are managed to achieve this, while enabling funding opportunities to be exploited to advance our goal of establishing new long-term experiments and sustaining existing ones.

This report was approved by the Trustees on 22 September 2022 and signed on their behalf by

Jeremy R.B. Tallowin

Jeremy R.B.Tallowin
(Chair of Trustees)

22 September 2022

Ecological Continuity Trust

Financial Statement and Balance Sheet

At the end of December 2021 the ECT had a balance of £88,327 which includes both restricted and unrestricted funds. We received £45,612 in voluntary income as outlined in our accompanying notes on the accounts.

We are grateful to the British Ecological Society for facilities, financial support and practical collaboration, and to all our donors for their financial and practical support and enthusiasm.

Ecological Continuity Trust SOFA for period 1st January 2021 to 31st December 2021

	Notes	2021			2020		
		Unrestricted	Restricted	Total	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total
Income							
Voluntary	2	10,612	35,000	45,612	96,167	15,000	111,167
Investment	3	596		596	25		25
In Kind income	4	43,177		43,177	42,330		42,330
TOTAL INCOME		54,385	35,000	89,385	138,522	15,000	153,522
Expenditure							
Cost of Generating Funds		4,655		4,655	4,768		4,768
Charitable Activities	5,6,7	22,438	43,968	66,406	25,148	2,000	27,148
Governance & Admin		5,148		5,148	5,038		5,038
In Kind expenditure	4	43,177		43,177	42,330		42,330
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	7	75,418	43,968	119,386	77,284	2,000	79,284
NET INCOMING/OUTGOING		-21,033	-8,968	-30,001	36,468	37,770	74,238
Funds Brought Forward		63,999	54,329	118,328	27,531	16,559	44,090
Funds carried forward	6,7	42,971	45,356	88,327	63,999	54,329	118,328


Ecological Continuity Trust

Ecological Continuity Trust Balance Sheet for period 1st January 2021 to 31st December 2021

		31.12.2021	31.12.2020	
	Notes	£	£	
Current Assets				
Debtors		25,000	31,258	
Creditors due within 1 year		2,686	1,356	2020 Restated from £10,356
Cash at bank		66,013	88,426	,
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		88,327	118,328	
Net Current Assets		88,327	118,328	
Total Assets		88,327	118,328	
Funds				
Restricted Funds	6,7	45,356	54,329	2020 restated from £20,559
Unrestricted Funds		42,972	63,999	2020 restated from £88,769
TOTAL FUNDS		88,327	118,328	

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on 22 September 2022 and are signed on its behalf by:

Jeffrey Duckett (Hon. Treasurer)



Notes to the Financial Statements

1. Accounting Policies - Basis of preparation – The accounts have been prepared under the FRS 102 policies, concepts and principles for smaller entities including the adjustment of estimates and errors and Charity Commission SORP2016.

Ecological Continuity Trust

2. Voluntary income – grants from the British Ecological Society of £25,000 and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation of £20,000 made up the majority of our income.
3. Investment income = bank interest and a compensation payment of £588 from HSBC after we closed our account with them.
4. In Kind income and expenditure and volunteer time – It is particularly difficult to estimate the money cost equivalent of time given to the ECT for things that, were it not given, it would have to pay for. Most of this given time is given by trustees, but outside the narrow, minimum formal limits required for responsible trusteeship. The figure given is based on £250 a day per person. Leaving aside time spent by the trustees, ECT enjoys commitments of time from half a dozen people. No cost equivalent can be calculated as the contributions are not susceptible to being expressed as services that the charity would otherwise pay for. The figure given is estimated on a 2% increase on the figure for 2020.
5. Costs of Activities:- ECT achieves its charitable aims through two sorts of activity:
 - a. practical matters of establishment, maintenance, operation and measurement of experiments;
 - b. communication, outreach, engagement and promotion of long term ecological experimentation.

Both sorts of activity are delivered in partnership with other organisations, ECT being the coordinating catalyst. The major costs are borne by partners. There is sometimes a delay between promising a grant to an institution and payment being requested. We have limited access to partners' information on expenditure on long term experiments, so we have no way of calculating an accurate monetary value of the catalytic role we fulfil although an estimate of at least £3,000,000 is supported by returns from a sample of our experiments.

Costs of activities in 2021

£	Direct costs of activities	Support costs apportioned <i>pro rata</i> to direct costs	Total costs of activities
Experiments	13,481	6,206	19,687
Outreach	25,931	15,516	41,447
TOTAL	39,412	21,722	61,134

Costs of activities in 2020 – as restated see note 7

£	Direct costs of activities	Support costs apportioned <i>pro rata</i> to direct costs	Total costs of activities
Experiments	3,098	6,187	9,285
Outreach	2,396	15,468	17,864
TOTAL	5,494	21,655	27,149

Ecological Continuity Trust

The following new grants were awarded during the year:

University of Birmingham – Hart - £2,000;
 University of Warwick – Faulkner - £2,000;
 Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew - Kowal - £2,000 to consortium for research on wildfire effects at Thursley common;
 University of Birmingham, Institute of Forest Research, Barba - £1,914;
 AFBI Hillsborough – Holland - £1,020
 Queen’s University Belfast - Meharg - £3,000;
 Open University grant for curation of data from the Somerford Mead grassland experiment near Wytham, Oxford – Gowing - £5,272 (of £6000 committed for this purpose in 2020).

6. Detail of Restricted Funds

2021	Opening balance	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Closing balance
Gibson Experiment	1,546	0	0	0	1,546
Continuity Fund	23,013	15,000	18,206	0	19,807
EFF Fund	24,805	20,000	25,762	0	19,043
TOTALs	54,323	35,000	43,968	0	45,355

2020	Opening balance	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Closing balance
Gibson Experiment	1,546	0	0	0	1,546
Continuity Fund	15,013	15,000	2000	0	23,013
EFF Fund	0	25,000	195	0	24,805
TOTALs	16,559	40,000	2,195	0	54,323

The grant of £25,000 received in 2020 from the Esmeé Fairbairn Foundation was treated as unrestricted in the 2020 accounts and this is restated here as restricted.

7. Restatement of Funds in 2020

- a. an accrual of £9,000 of expenditure was included in the 2020 accounts in expectation that two grants that had been offered would be claimed. This proved to be incorrect, with one of them partly claimed during 2021 and the other abandoned. Restatement of the figures for the Continuity Fund enables accurate comparison between the 2020 and 2021 figures for the Continuity Fund.
- b. The 2020 accounts treated the grant from the Esmeé Fairbairn Foundation as unrestricted grant. While not incorrect this treatment made clear comparison of funds between years more

Ecological Continuity Trust

complicated than necessary and we have chosen to restate this grant within the restricted funds. This change has had the effect of reducing the unrestricted funds apparently available to the charity although the real effect on operational decisions has been neutral.