Ecological Continuity Trust

Trustees' report and financial statements
1st January 2020 to 31st December 2020.

Company Number: 6652160

Charity Number: 1126122

Ecological Continuity Trust

Contents

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 ten 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.

ECT will continue to support LTEs as before, with the addition of long-term monitoring studies in 2021 and beyond. The rationale for this expansion of ECT's remit and vision is threefold:

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 opportunity provided by LTM studies to 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

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 experimental platforms 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-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 2020, our activities to forward our public benefit were as follows:

- ECT registered **two** 'new' LTEs in 2020, bringing the total number of currently active LTEs on ECT's register to 33 across 30 different sites. The additions were: **Hillsborough** in Northern Ireland, which has been investigating the impacts of long-term nutrient fertilization on grassland since 1970. This experiment is of importance and public interest in that it has shown how: (1) agricultural grasslands can actively sequester carbon either under low or high management intensity (i.e. low and high cattle manure applications); (2) grassland soils have not reached carbon 'saturation' even after 44 years of management; (3) repeated applications of cattle slurry may significantly increase soil carbon sequestration, and (4) soil carbon sequestration can offset between 9 and 25% of greenhouse gas emissions associated with fertilized grasslands; **Colt Park Meadows** LTE, located within the Ingleborough National Nature Reserve (NNR) in the Yorkshire Dales National Park, was added to the register in October. Colt Park LTE is investigating the impacts of specific land management interventions - grazing by sheep and/or cattle, hay cutting, seed addition and nutrient fertilization - on ecosystem services, especially carbon storage and resilience to climate extremes such as drought.

- COVID-19 lockdown imposed different fieldwork constraints on LTEs depending upon different institutions' interpretation of guidance and the need for social distancing. In collaboration with CIEEM, the ECT shared guidance from Defra to CIEEM with the LTE User Group to enable essential LTE fieldwork to take place. ECT's action was instrumental in avoiding gaps in some long-term datasets occurring in 2020.

- Despite COVID-19 severely limiting activities on LTEs, the following ECT grants were awarded in 2020. **Wardlow Hay Cop** LTE: Chris Taylor (University of Sheffield) was awarded a grant of £2k to facilitate fieldwork research. **Peatland-ES-UK** LTE was awarded a grant of £1360 for

LICOR equipment repair. **BIFoR-FACE** LTE was awarded a grant of £2k for sample archiving and data curation equipment.

- ECT initiated a data curation pilot project with the NERC Environmental Information Data Centre (EIDC) at Lancaster. Somerford Mead LTE was selected to be the 'pioneer LTE' and the ECT offered a £6k grant to facilitate this project to David Gowing at the Open University.

- Three of the LTEs on ECT's national register narrowly missed being damaged by wildfires in 2020. Wildfires are set to become more frequent under a changing UK climate. One of the LTEs that came very close to being burned was Thursley Common in Surrey, which was originally established in 1989 by Sally Powers to examine the effects of nitrogen pollution on a heathland system. In 2020, the future of Thursley Common LTE was uncertain. The ECT therefore sought new 'champions' for this LTE with the idea that it might be repurposed to include an examination of the effects of wildfires on heathland restoration. Jill Kowal from the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, plus collaborators from the Natural History Museum and Queen Mary University of London, have taken on this role, with the JNCC and Natural England being key stakeholders in this initiative.

- ECT undertook an LTE impacts survey in 2020, which was designed to critically examine scientific, economic and social impacts of existing LTEs. Response to this survey highlighted the need to redesign ECT's website homepage, which was carried out in Spring 2020. The website was changed to showcase more clearly how LTEs contribute to policymaking around climate change and sustainable land management. A secondary landing page now includes detailed impacts from five 'case study' LTEs. Homepage traffic to the ECT website totalled 2534 views in 2020, a 15% increase on 2019.

- ECT participated in the British Ecological Society's (BES) 2020 *Festival of Ecology* with a virtual exhibition booth that was visited online between 14-18 December 2020. The festival attracted 1492 online delegates. The ECT booth showcased four of the long-term experiments on our register. A new virtual reality (VR) experience of the Whim Bog LTE, completed in 2020 in collaboration with the VR technology provider Stickee UK, was launched at the Festival in the form of 360-degree videos made available exclusively to delegates via the ECT online booth. The new VR headsets arising from this project will be available to a wider audience when in-person conferences and meetings resume.

- A thematic session on '*Long-term environmental monitoring – challenges and opportunities*', jointly organised by Ben Sykes, ECT's

Executive Director, and Don Monteith of the UK Environmental Change Network, took place at the BES 2020 *Festival of Ecology*. Keynote speakers included: Jaana Bäck, University of Helsinki eLTER on '*The European Long-term Ecosystem Research Network*'; Denise Pallett, CEH Wallingford on '*Twenty years of long-term abiotic and biotic monitoring across the UK & a case study at Wytham*'; Sue Benham, Forest Research, Alice Holt on '*Woodland plant ecological surveys under the Long-term Intensive Forest Monitoring Programme*'; Roberto Salguero-Gomez, University of Oxford on '*Emerging robotics technologies for grassland environmental monitoring*' and Paul Howden-Leach, Wildlife Acoustics Inc. on '*The latest developments in bioacoustics monitoring systems*'. Over 400 delegates participated in this thematic session.

- ECT initiated two new strategic partnerships in 2020 as follows:
    - the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) which has been championing the gathering, curation, sharing and use of data about the UK's wildlife for over 20 years. It is the UK's largest partnership for nature working with over 200 partners. ECT has become an Organisational Member of the NBN.
    - the Sustainable Soils Alliance (SSA), a campaigning partnership of farming organisations, businesses, NGOs, applied science and academia working together to restore our soils to health.

- ECT's Executive Director Ben Sykes contributed the following ECT articles for each publication of the BES's quarterly *Niche* magazine in 2020:
    - *'Growing the Nation's Network of LTEs'* (March issue).
    - A feature article on *'Climate Change – what long-term experiments can tell us'* in association with ECT trustee Jonathan Silvertown (June issue).
    - *'Wildfires – new opportunities for long-term ecological experiments'* (September issue).
    - *'Long-term ecological experiments in virtual reality* (December issue).

- ECT again produced a quarterly newsletter throughout 2020 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 series of podcast interviews were carried out in 2020, all of which are available to view on the ECT website at: . https://www.ecologicalcontinuitytrust.org/podcasts.

- Jonathan Silvertown, University of Edinburgh on the importance of LTEs (January);
- Kris Hart, Operations Manager at the BIFoR-FACE long-term CO_2 elevation experiment at Norbury in Staffordshire (January);
- Chris Field, Manchester Metropolitan University on Little Budworth Common LTE in Cheshire (February);
- Simon Caporn, Manchester Metropolitan University on the Ruabon Moor LTE in north-east Wales (May);
- Rob Marrs, University of Liverpool on the Hordron Edge & Bamford Edge LTEs in Derbyshire (June);
- Gareth Phoenix, University of Sheffield on the Wardlow Hay Cop LTE in Derbyshire (July);
- Simon Peacock, Newcastle University on the Palace Leas LTE in Northumberland (September);
- Laurence Jones, UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (Bangor) on the Newborough Warren LTE on Anglesey in north Wales (October).

- The ECT hosted the following series of six webinars in 2020, which proved popular with our core audience, each attracting up to 50 attendees. Recordings of most of these webinars can be viewed on ECT's YouTube channel at: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjcaas_6y9rD0lulNsxGEXw

  - Sabine Reinsch, Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (Bangor) *Long-term climate change manipulation at Clocaenog LTE - Lessons learned from 20 years of drying & warming upland heath on organo-mineral soil* (24 January);
  - Giulio Curioni, Birmingham Institute of Forest Research (BIFoR) *Data curation & sample archiving at the BIFoR-FACE woodland CO_2 enrichment experiment in Staffordshire* (26 March);
  - Markus Fischer & Eric Allan, University of Bern, Switzerland *The German Biodiversity Exploratories: Large-scale & long-term* (26 June);
  - Rob Marrs, University of Liverpool *A future for the Hordron Edge & Bamford Edge LTE plots in Derbyshire* (20 August);
  - Vicky Morgan, Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) *The value of long-term field experiments to end users* (26 November);
  - Charlie Burrell, Knepp Wildland *Impacts of wilding on biodiversity & soil health* (1 December).

- New webpages were published in 2020 for four of the LTEs on our register: North Wyke Farm Platform, Hillsborough, Little Budworth Common and Ruabon Moor.

- Guest blog postings were published in January and June for a broad non-scientific audience, featuring University of Oxford research staff taking stock of our flagship RainDrop experiment, and Rothamsted Research staff discussing greenhouse gas emissions from the North Wyke Farm Platform experiment in Devon. In January, Jane Hawkins from Rothamsted Research (North Wyke) also posted an accessible article on the Rothamsted Research website titled "*In LTE We Trust*" covering a summary of all three Rothamsted Research LTEs on the ECT register. See: https://www.rothamsted.ac.uk/articles/lte-we-trust.

- New journal publications arose from the research at several LTEs on our register in 2020, most notably this year from the Scottish LTEs on our register – MOORCO and Glen Finglas. All have been added to the comprehensive bibliographies which ECT maintains on the individual webpages for each experiment on our register.

- During 2020, ECT's social media following increased significantly as we continued to broaden our audience and appeal:

    - Twitter following up to 1,110, a 42% increase from 2019;
    - YouTube recruited 11 subscribers and accrued 142 views of our corporate introduction video and 68 views of our VR preview video for the Buxton experiment.

- The LTE User Group increased to 175 members, a 25% increase from 2019.

Funding and Staff

The British Ecological Society (BES) continued to support the ECT with a grant of £25,000 in 2020. Our Executive Director was successful in securing funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation (£45,000) and the Britford Bridge Trust (£20,000). Private donations to the ECT amounted to £35,050 during 2020, of which £5,050 was donated via our online CAF platform. ECT registered with the AmazonSmile Foundation in September 2020, to generate additional small donations via the online purchases of Amazon customers. By the end of the calendar year, 14 Amazon customers were using AmazonSmile to support ECT. A first income transfer from the Foundation was not expected until February 2021.

Our Executive Director, Ben Sykes, worked 4 days per week for the Trust during 2020. With the above new funding in place, the Director commenced planning to recruit a part-time (0.5FTE) Communications Officer to the ECT in early 2021.

ECT coped with the coronavirus pandemic in the following ways:

With a long-standing commitment to home-working and online meetings (for cost and environmental reasons), the ECT and its Executive Director continued working normally for the most part, making considerable headway with grant applications in its fundraising campaign, as indicated above. The Director attended fewer external meetings and the ECT elected not to hold a national conference in 2020 in favour of extra lunchtime webinars delivered online. There were two areas in which progress was compromised for a significant proportion of the year – site visits to LTEs by our Director for relationship-building and communications purposes, and partnership building with external organisations that had furloughed or released significant numbers of staff (particularly the National Trust and the Field Studies Council). It is intended that these activities will resume with new momentum in 2021.

Volunteers

Volunteers are an integral part of ECT's ability to sustain the 33 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 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. 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 at many LTEs throughout 2020.

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

Governance

Following an open call for new trustees issued in February 2020, ECT recruited two new trustees to its Board in 2020. These were Ken Thompson (University of Sheffield) and David Stone (Deputy Chief Scientist, Natural England). Both were appointed for a five-year term from 1 June 2020.

Following the ECT's Board of Trustees revision of the Trust's governance model in autumn 2019, full Board meetings became *quarterly* from 1 January 2020. The Board's remit is to focus on strategic issues. At our July AGM, the Board approved a small change to ECT's constitution to allow for a maximum of 13 trustees to be recruited to the Board, an increase of one from the previous limit

of 12. The ECT's Executive Committee, comprising ECT's Chairman, Deputy Chairman, Honorary Treasurer and Executive Director, met monthly throughout 2020 and oversaw 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 2020.

ECT prepared and implemented several new corporate policies in 2020, on *Safeguarding*, *Health and Safety*, *Conflicts of Interest*, *Complaints*, *Risk Management*, *Whistleblowing*, *Managing Volunteers*, and *Funding Investments*. All our policies are available to view on request.

There were no issues or incidents arising under our *Safeguarding* or *Health and Safety* policies during this reporting year.

Plans for the Future

ECT will recruit a new part-time (0.5FTE) Communications Officer in 2021, to be appointed on a two-year contract, thereby growing our capacity. The Trust will also appoint its Executive Director full-time in early 2021, enabling the 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.

ECT will launch the expansion of its remit in 2021 to include long-term monitoring studies (LTMs), by calling for Expressions-of-Interest from the LTM research community to create 'hubs' of long-term ecological research linked to the 33 currently active LTEs on ECT's national register. Depending upon funding availability, grant resources will remain focused on LTEs until such a time as our scheme can be extended to LTM studies.

The Trust will conduct a review of the vulnerability of the 33 currently active LTEs on our register so that we are better able to prioritise any necessary future interventions.

ECT will develop a formal Communications Strategy, to include a digital communications strategy nested within it and aimed at making wider use of additional and appropriate digital platforms to further the Trust's objectives.

ECT's current fundraising campaign will continue throughout 2021, focused initially on securing further small core funding contributions from target trusts such as the Charlotte Heber-Percy Charitable Trust and the Ernest Kleinwort Charitable Trust. We will also target significant project-based funding from the Garfield Weston Foundation in an attempt to boost ECT's Continuity Fund for small grants. We will continue to seek relationships with key funders for whom an invitation to apply is required.

The Trust will seek to partner with a key external organisation to hold a national,

in-person conference on LTEs/LTMs in late 2021 that will engage end-users alongside ecological researchers to their mutual benefit and the benefit of society at large.

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

We plan to establish the Trust's first ever 'pool' of volunteers whose time and energies 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 2021.

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

ECT will explore the development of a smartphone 'app' for communicating the science and outputs/benefits from LTEs.

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

ECT will continue to collaborate with NERC's Environmental Information Data Centre (EIDC) based in Lancaster to curate and secure the data from the Somerford Mead LTE for which data are at risk of loss.

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. One or more of the following will be prioritised: National Trust, Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM), Field Studies Council, NatureScot, Natural Resources Wales, the Wildlife Trusts, the British Trust for Ornithology and the RSPB.

Support for existing and new LTEs will remain a core activity of the ECT. We expect more than one 'new' LTE to emerge into view in 2021 that has not previously been registered with us, and we will extend our services to those LTEs through free profile-raising and eligibility for our small grants scheme, amongst other things.

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. Tallowin

Chair of Trustees 22 April 2021

Jeremy R.B. Tallowin

Ecological Continuity Trust

Financial Review

Financial Position

On 31st December 2020, ECT had funds of £109,328 comprised of £88,769 unrestricted and £20,559 restricted. Expenditure during the year was £45,954 (or £88,284 when in kind expenditure is included) and income £111,192 (or £153,522 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 31/12/2020, 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.

Robin Buxton
(Hon. Treasurer)

22nd April 2021

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 2020 which comprise of financial activities, the balance sheet and the related notes.

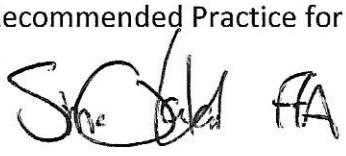
Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner: As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts, you consider that the audit requirement of section 43(2) of the Charities Act 1993 (the Act) does not apply. It is our responsibility to state, on the basis of procedures 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 require 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 2020 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



Legal & Administrative Matters,

Trustees/Company Directors – serving during the report period

Jeremy Tallowin (Chair)
Robin Buxton (Treasurer and Secretary)
Jonathan Silvertown
Keith Goulding
Carly Stevens
Alison Birkett
Kadmiel Maseyk
Charles Holt
Bridgett Emmett
Kenneth Thompson – took office from 23rd April 2020
David Stone – took office from 20th July 2020
(Stewart Clarke – took office from 19th January 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 Witteham, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RA
Independent Examiner: Certax Accounting, Creek End, Burcot, Abingdon, OX14 3DJ
Bank: HSBC, Cornmarket Street, Oxford OX1 3HY
CAF Bank, West Malling, Kent ME19 4JQ
Contact: Dr Robin Buxton, Manor House, Little Wittenham, Abingdon, OX14 4RA
Number of employees: 1
Web site: 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.

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. One trustee claimed travel expenses during the reporting period and the Treasurer used personal cards 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. Alison Birkett is a trustee of British Ecological Society, which gives grants to ECT and is an employee of Lancaster University which received a grant from ECT. Carly Stevens is also an employee of Lancaster University and a co-supervisor of two students, one of them in receipt of a research grant from ECT and the other conducting research using the RainDrop Experiment. 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.

Accountant's Fees: for conducting independent scrutiny of accounts and related submissions - £240.

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 experiment and sustaining existing ones.

This report was approved by the Trustees on 22 April 2021 and signed on their behalf by

Jeremy R.B. Tallowin

Jeremy R.B.Tallowin
(Chair of Trustees)

22 April 2021

Ecological Continuity Trust

Financial Statement and Balance Sheet

At the end of December 2020 the ECT had a balance of £109,328 which includes both restricted and unrestricted funds. We received £111,167 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 2020 to 31st December 2020

		2020			2019		
	Notes	Unrestr	Restr	Total	Unrestr	Restr	Total
Income							
Voluntary	2	96,167	15,000	111,167	19,880	10,000	29,880
Investment	3	25		25	2		2
In Kind income	4	42,330		42,330	41,500		41,500
TOTAL INCOME		**138,522**	**15,000**	**153,522**	**61,382**	**10,000**	**71,382**
Expenditure							
Cost of Generating Funds		4,768		4,768	2,500		2,500
Charitable Activities	5,6	25,148	11,000	36,148	32,073	10,025	42,098
Governance & Admin		5,038		5,038	3,672		3,672
In Kind expenditure	4	42,330		42,330	41,500		41,500
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		**77,284**	**11000**	**88,284**	**79,745**	**10,025**	**89,770**
NET INCOMING/OUTGOING		61,238	4,000	65,238	**- 18,363**	**- 25**	**- 18,388**
Funds Brought Forwards		27,531	16,559	44,090	45,894	16,584	62,478
Funds carried forwards	7	88,769	20,559	109,328	27,531	16,559	44,090

Ecological Continuity Trust
Balance Sheet for period 1st January 2020 to 31st December 2020

	Notes	31.12.2020	31.12.2019
Current Assets			
Debtors		31,258	27,889
Creditors due within 1 year		10,356	4,681
Cash at bank		88,426	20,882
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		109,328	44,090
net current assets		109,328	44,090
Total Assets		109,328	44,090
Funds			
Restricted Funds	7	20,559	16,559
Unrestricted Funds		88,769	27,531
TOTAL FUNDS		109,328	44,090

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on 22 April 2021 and are signed on its behalf by:

Robin Buxton (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.
2. Voluntary income – grants from the British Ecological Society and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, each of £25,000, the Britford Bridge Trust of £20,000 the Cockiollie Trust of £30,000, a match-funding donation of £5044 from Robin Buxton and various private donations amounting to £5044.
3. Investment income = bank interest.
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 2019.

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 co-ordinating catalyst. The major costs are born by partners. There is sometimes a delay between promising a grant to an institution and payment being requested, in one case more than one year. 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 fill although an estimate of at least £3,000,000 is supported by returns from a sample of our experiments.

Costs of activities in 2020

£	Direct costs of activities	Support costs apportioned pro rata to direct costs	Total costs of activities
Experiments	12,098	6,187	18,285
Outreach	2,396	15,468	17,864
TOTAL	14,494	21,655	36,149

Costs of activities in 2019

£	Direct costs of activities	Support costs apportioned pro rata to direct costs	Total costs of activities
Experiments	20,530	1,791	22,320
Outreach	21,569	1,881	23,450
TOTAL	42,099	3,672	45,770

Of the direct costs of experiments, £9,000 is commitment to projects that have not yet begun at Wytham, Oxfordshire, for data curation of the Somerford Mead meadow restoration project and repurposing of the Gibson experiment as the original purpose, an experiment on successional processes in former arable land, has been fulfilled. £2,000 was a small project research grant to a student at the University of Sheffield.

6. Detail of Restricted Funds

2020	Opening balance	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Closing balance
Gibson Experiment	1,546	0	1,546	0	0
Continuity Fund	15,013	15,000	9,454	0	20,559
TOTALs	**16,559**	**15,000**	**11,000**		**20,559**

2019	Opening balance	Income	Expenditure	Transfer	Closing balance
Gibson Experiment	1,546	0	0	0	1,546
Continuity Fund	15,038	10,000	10,025	0	15,013
TOTALs	**16,584**	**10,000**	**10,025**	**0**	**16,559**

The grant of £25,000 received in 2020 from the Esmeé Fairbairn Foundation is for particular core costs. It is tracked in management accounts but, by agreement, not treated here as a restricted fund as it is not project related.