

Sustainable St Albans

Annual report and financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2024

A group of local people ...



Working together for an environmentally sustainable district

Registered charity 1173118

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Contents	Page
Annual review	2
Trustees’ formal (statutory format) report	20
Independent examiner’s report	23
Financial statements:	
Statement of financial activities	24
Balance sheet	25
Notes to the financial statements	26

Introduction from Chair

Sustainable St Albans (“SSA”) is an environmental charity working to help the City and District of St Albans (“the District”) to become a more environmentally sustainable place, in response to the climate and ecological crises that we face. These problems require urgent action at all levels: internationally, nationally, locally, and individually. SSA raises awareness of these issues across the District, provides organisations and residents with information about the climate actions that they can take and runs practical carbon-cutting projects.

The year ended 31 March 2024 (*referred to in this review as “the year”*) and indeed the longer period from 1 April 2023 to the date of this report (*referred to in this review as “the period”*) have their significant features, including trustee changes. These are outlined in the following report, but there are no developments that are so material as to need highlighting in this introduction. Instead, we would like to take this opportunity to reflect on some key elements in our history and survey the local sustainability landscape as it stands today.

Highlights from our history

TSA is formed

At an open meeting in Fleetville Community Centre in February 2009, a St Albans resident posed the question: should we start a Transition Town group? A few stepped forward to become the first Steering Group of an unincorporated association, Transition St Albans (“TSA”). According to the Transition Manual, our 12 Step process was to end with there being lots of distinct, self-sustaining individual local initiatives, each designed to lower the area’s ecological footprint and, importantly, with the local Council having adopted an “Energy Descent Action Plan”. But importantly without a Steering Group – the idea being that we would no longer be needed! How did we do?

Much of what TSA did would be instantly recognisable to our members and other supporters today. We held open meetings and talks, we showed films, we spoke at District Council, business, resident and faith group meetings; we organised some big events, such as a Bike Day in Verulamium Park and an “Open Eco House” weekend, and we began two of our most enduring projects, Open Food Gardens and the loan of thermal imaging cameras.

FoodSmiles is formed

In 2013 TSA hosted an open meeting on Community Supported Agriculture; within a year the enthusiasm of that first meeting had led to the establishment of FoodSmiles in Harpenden. This independent collective now also has a site in St Albans, and has grown almost 17 tonnes of fruit and veg in its first ten years!

SuStFest and Postcards to Paris

After a sequence of disappointing climate COPs (Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change), 2015 saw a swelling of optimism as politicians and civil society alike hoped that the Paris COP would lead to a global climate accord. TSA's desire to do something special in the run up to COP 21 led to two of our key moments:

- The Mayor of St Albans cut the ribbon to open the very first "Sustainable St Albans Week" in November 2015. SuStFest has become such an established part of the District calendar, and a model for the national "Great Big Green Week"; it is hard believe that it was conceived less than ten years ago.
- We invited residents, and particularly school pupils, to send "Postcards to Paris" setting out their hopes for an international agreement to make climate-saving commitments. Over 2,000 cards, many of them beautifully illustrated, were delivered to the UK negotiating team and were acknowledged afterwards by Amber Rudd, then the UK Secretary of State for Climate Change.

Changing our name and becoming a charity

Sustainable St Albans Week instantly established a new and much more natural brand and name for the group, which we adopted on becoming a legally incorporated charity in 2017. As a charity, SSA has better access to grant funding, although the status has also required us to become a more formal organisation, mindful of our significant regulatory compliance obligations including political neutrality. Charitable status also reassures other local organisations that we have substance and allows us to be accountable to our members.

The Climate Emergency declaration

In 2019 we joined an informal movement that was seeking to ensure that government at all levels declared a Climate Emergency and pledged to act accordingly. Working with Friends of the Earth, with whom we have partnered many times over the years, we delivered a 1,700+ signature petition to the District Council in July 2019, asking for just such a declaration. Our petition included a proposed Council motion, more demanding in its content than almost any other we had seen before.

In fact, the Council did not just debate our petition but wholeheartedly proposed a comprehensive Climate Emergency motion in line with our chosen wording. Many Councillors spoke in favour of the motion, none spoke against, and on 10 July 2019 St Albans City and District Council voted unanimously to declare a Climate Emergency, pledging to "do everything within [its] power to make the whole of St Albans City and District carbon neutral by 2030".

Where we are today

Barely a week goes by without a major global heating story, whether glacier loss, record temperatures on land or at sea, continuing drought or flooding by storms and hurricanes. We recognise that at all levels of society many fine words are said, and that many positive actions are being taken, but the trustees continue to hold the view that much more must be done to encourage many more people, in all walks of life, to act differently if we are to ameliorate the effects of global heating.

We know that a climate neutral St Albans acting alone would have an imperceptible direct impact even on aggregate UK greenhouse gas emissions. The critically important objective is that our District can be counted ever more loudly in the movement that will catalyse the larger scale measures that are needed. Greta Thunberg's "You are never too small to make a difference" (still) works for us!

Thanks to the enormous efforts of many past and present volunteers, and to the many groups that we have worked with, we have achieved a great deal. Our District is a veritable hive of eco-activity, but plainly our work remains urgent and essential. We have ourselves continued to evolve, introducing new projects and doing the best we can to influence others to act on the climate emergency.

As a charity, one of our tasks is to raise awareness of the climate risks that we all face and to encourage the mitigation and adaptation that will be needed to stave off the worst impacts of climate change. The principal way that we do this is to highlight the steps that individuals, households, organisations and communities can take to reduce their own ecological footprints.

However far you are along your sustainability journey, we hope that you find the remainder of this report informative and encouraging.

<https://sustainablestalbans.org/>



Photo: Tobias Weinhold, Unsplash

Raising awareness and community engagement

What it is

Our website, thanks to its events calendar and blog section, and our monthly newsletter, have been key elements of our community engagement this year. Both regularly feature and promote events and activities run by other groups that we identify as relevant to our aims and objectives, alongside our own.

We continue to reach out to the more influential institutions of our community. For example, we collaborated with the St Albans Cathedral so that their “Community Showcase” would feature as the opening event of SuStFest23, on which evening the West End of the Cathedral was illuminated in green. We have been grateful recipients of their “Mission Giving” fund and have continued to support each other’s events.

We are members of the Chamber of Commerce, and in the summer of 2023, we assisted in the judging of their “Sustainable Business” award.

We have also linked with “The Odyssey” cinema, and were able to showcase their environmental achievements and commitments in a blog published during the year. We are keen to promote sustainability stories from around the District on the blog page of our website. For example, the Alban City School post tells the story of the 84 solar panels that they recently installed on the school roof. These have the potential to generate 35.7 kWp (kilowatt peak, the rate at which solar panels generate energy at peak performance).

Perhaps our most important single event of the year was held in September, when we hosted a well-attended evening with some friendly experts to discuss the draft Local Plan during its consultation period. With a focus of course on the sustainability, climate emergency and nature aspects of the Plan, residents were able to quiz our panellists, and so better appreciate the Council’s proposals and formulate their own comments and suggestions. As discussed elsewhere in this report, we also made a submission of our own.

Less positively, our Climate Champions remained available to the community over the course of the year, but demand for their insightful climate change focused talks has dwindled, except from schools.

We reported last year on the declining impact of the “Count Us In” tool for recording and adding together the climate pledges of individuals within a community. Sadly, Do Nation, the company that hosted this material, has gone into liquidation. As a consequence, the “St Albans Climate Action Network” data is, it seems, now lost. In recording her company’s demise, the Do Nation founder referenced a number of competitors in a changing market, but it is not evident that any of these can offer an equivalent calculation of the carbon savings made by the actions of a geographic community.

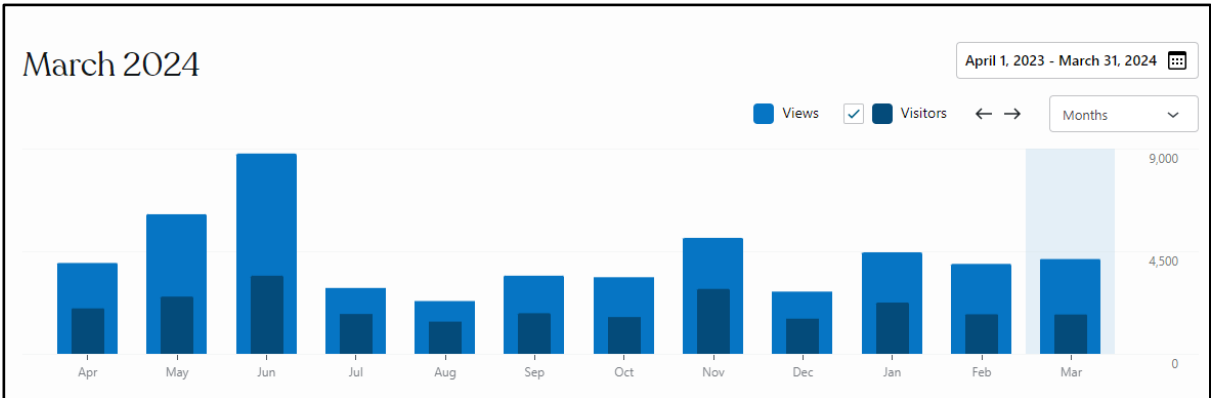
Despite these setbacks, we continue to believe in the potential for local examples of climate change mitigation and adaptation to inspire and encourage further actions, and we will of course continue with this important element of our work.

More positively, we should also note that the District’s new “eco hub”, The Green House, which we assisted with seed-funding, formally opened in May of 2024. As we explained last year, our two organisations have common aims and some personnel overlap in the respective governance and volunteer groups. We share the Green House’s ambition that the availability of a welcoming physical space will add significantly to our community’s engagement with the sustainability agenda, and will continue to work together as much as possible.

Statistics

The Sustainable St Albans website had 25,460 visitors in the year to 31st March 2024 with 52,644 page views (Year to 31st March 2023 the site had 61,000 page views).

This amounts to just over 2 page views per visitor.



The volume of traffic varied over the year with the peak of 8,786 views from 3,407 visitors in June 2023, which can be broadly associated with SustFest.

Newsletter

The Sustainable St Albans newsletter had 1,865 subscribers at 31st March 2024 (31st March 2023, 1,650).

Facebook

SSA had 302 members and 2,990 followers as of March 31st 2024 (31st March 2023 - 2,950).

Instagram

SSA had 2,641 followers as of 31st March 2024 (31st March 2023 - 2450 followers).

To receive the newsletter please click the [sign up button](#) at the foot of our website home page: <https://sustainablestalbans.org/>

Community engagement also includes **Our Planet Our Future (OPOF)**, which was launched originally as a festival and continues as a series of open events, including talks with guest speakers presenting thoughtful and often novel perspectives on actions towards a more sustainable life and a lower carbon economy.

OPOF is a continuing programme with events held approximately every two months.

Highlights of the OPOF year

During the year we launched the OPOF Book Club, with topical and interesting reads. We now have an active membership and meet quarterly in Harpenden for discussion and thoughtful exploration of the issues addressed in our books.

The OPOF Guided Walk exploring Batford Springs in the summer of 2023 was highly popular and reached full capacity.

Our film event, where we had the opportunity to watch and discuss “The Ants and The Grasshopper”, was also well attended with positive feedback.

The Harpenden OPOF tree is thriving, and has been bestowed with a distinctive wooden plaque.

Other events have had a lower attendance due to a combination of factors, but we do intend to continue to grow opportunities for community outreach and education.

A full report on each of our OPOF events is signposted at [Our Planet Our Future - Sustainable St Albans](#)

Statistics

Typically 15-25 people attend these events primarily from Harpenden (although our reach spreads to St Albans, the surrounding villages and even London). Nearly 30 participants joined us for the Guided Walk to explore Batford Springs.



The Sustainability Festival (SustFest)



What it is

The charity coordinates a festival (usually about ten days in duration) during which any local organisation that wishes to participate puts on an event (or events), of their own design but relating to sustainability, for the general public. Our key role is to encourage, support and then coordinate participants, and to promote the festival as a whole.

The charity itself runs some events within the festival and other organisations, particularly schools, hold private events that take place during the festival time and which are acknowledged in the online programme.

What happened in the year

For SustFest23 the team worked hard to amend our registration process so that events could be directly added to the website and then verified before immediate publication onto the events calendar. This had the advantage that events were registered in an efficient ongoing process. As groups registered they could view events that were already planned, enabling us to limit crossover of events and dates.

Also for 2023 we coordinated SustFest to run alongside the national initiative by the Climate Coalition "Great Big Green Week", with the objective of increasing awareness and engagement by combining the two.

The festival was launched with a large event at St Albans Cathedral, which was a community showcase of local charities and very well attended by sustainable / nature / climate action themed local groups. It was by far the largest event of the festival for that year, with over 500 attendees.

Statistics

55 unique events were registered for SustFest 23, with 90 separate public events (some across multiple days); this was up very slightly on the 85 public events held in 2022.

17 local Sustainable Schools ran SustFest events or a sustainable week, which was celebrated with a blog and press release.

We estimate that 1,264 people attended public events. This was up very slightly from 1,215 in 2022.

Sustainability Markets

What are they

Our Sustainability Markets have stalls run by local businesses and organisation that offer products and services that support a sustainable lifestyle. Pitches are also offered to charities and community groups with objectives consistent with the preservation and improvement of the environment.

The markets have been running in Harpenden since July 2021 and are now run five times a year in partnership with Harpenden Town Council. Stall holders are charged a modest pitch fee and any net proceeds are shared equally between the Council and the charity,



What happened in the year

Markets were held in May, July, September, November 2023 and March 2024. The market is now established on the tree lined area of Harpenden Common in front of Park Hall and is an established fixture in the town's event calendar. We are delighted to have regular solar powered food stalls and trucks selling locally sourced hot take away products, as well as locally roasted coffee.

During the year we acquired our own branded market stall / gazebo, for use at the markets and other SSA events. Many of the charity's volunteers do shifts on the market and the events provide a regular opportunity for residents to find out more about the charity's activities and how they can take action or volunteer.

Meet Your Neighbours Projects

What it is

We believe that strong street communities are the foundation stone for building sustainable, resilient town and city communities. The Meet Your Neighbours projects enable residents from all



backgrounds and ages to gather and connect in a safe, local space. Temporary road closures give children a large car-free space outside their home for play and healthy exercise, including learning to ride a bike or scooter and taking a first step towards independent active travel.

Playing Out

[Playing Out St Albans District](#) supports St Albans District residents to close their own road for up to eight short closures a year to enjoy play and neighbourly chat. Residents are informed and supported by Sustainable St Albans which also processes the applications (which are ultimately authorised by [St Albans District Council](#)).

Our Street Party

[Our Street Party](#) is a Hertfordshire-wide community group which supports residents to hold street parties. The St Albans District branch is supported by Sustainable St Albans and is run by the Meet Your Neighbours team. Residents send Street Party applications directly to Hertfordshire County Council for authorisation.

Festive Streets

The Sustainable St Albans [Festive Streets](#) project encourages neighbours to decorate the windows of their streets in the wintertime.

Statistics and Highlights

During the year to 31 March 2024, we have supported over 100 separate street gatherings and helped over 47 streets hold street parties, many of which celebrated the King's Coronation in May. 18 streets were granted permission to close their streets for Playing Out sessions in calendar year 2023 (27 in 2022 calendar year). This represented 72 community gatherings in calendar year 2023 for children and adults in their own home streets.

We also saw the development of sustainable activities around the street gatherings, including stalls to share or swap tools, furniture, books, games, clothes, plants/seeds and food, as well as organised litter picks, leaf clearing and initiatives to encourage wildlife.

Following the success of the Festive Streets initiative in the winter of 2020 (during Covid restrictions), support was once again offered to local streets in the winter of 2023/24.

A survey undertaken during the year has shown that, thanks to street gatherings supported by us, 93% of respondents knew more people on their street and 89% felt more involved in the community in which they live. The survey also evidenced that our activities have a lasting "ripple effect", leading to positive changes such as increased social contact, community activities and empowered active citizens.

The Meet Your Neighbours mailing list has over 600 subscribers (calendar year end 2022 and 2023).

Thermal Imaging Camera Project

What it is

We have two thermal imaging cameras which are free for residents of the District to borrow. We also have a community camera, which has been made available for schools and community groups. The cameras enable you to see heat leaking from, or cold air entering, a building, by taking colour-coded images that highlight temperature differences.



For example, the camera can highlight insufficient loft insulation, gaps in floorboards, draughty windows and badly fitted loft hatches. Areas like this allow warmth to escape, meaning you use more fuel to keep your house warm. For these purposes, the cameras work most effectively in the colder months.

More [information about the camera project](#), including how to borrow one, is available from our website.

What happened in the year

Over the year, the level of interest for the cameras was lower than in the prior year, albeit that engagement was at an all-time high and some of the borrowings may have been diverted to the new community camera. Interest was also variable across the winter (not unrelated to the weather). The community camera initiative was fully launched with information sessions in September, and this camera was loaned out for more than 15 weeks, being utilised by seven schools and four community groups, as well as individuals when not in use otherwise.

The Open Eco Home events organised by local author Judith Leary-Joyce were hugely popular and largely full or overbooked.

We look forward to the tenth anniversary of the first camera purchase in 2014, since when we have supported many households and community groups in increasing fuel efficiency in their homes and buildings.

Statistics

Attendance at information/training sessions	Year to March 2024 - 111 (2023 - 193)
Number of times camera was borrowed*	Year to March 2024 - 90 (2023 - 166)
Attendance at Open Home sessions	Year to March 2024 - 42 (2023 – not recorded)

* Excludes community camera use.

Sustainable schools

What it is

An information and resource hub supporting local schools to improve environmental education, to reduce their school’s ecological footprint and facilitate the sharing of best practice from a sustainability perspective. Find out more at [Sustainable Schools - Sustainable St Albans](#).

This initiative encompasses:

- the provision of teaching and assembly resources suitable for all school ages;
- actions that schools can take as communities; and
- opportunities for schools to join local and national initiatives.



What happened in the year

SustFest Schools week provided the opportunity for many district schools to turn their attention to their school grounds' roles in improving habitat and biodiversity. Local schools were also involved in 'Green Lunches', plastic-free days, Learning and Loving Trees and litter picks.

Our Climate Champions gave talks to over 1,000 students and our Harpenden Schools took part in a hugely successful Christmas jumper swap for the Harpenden Sustainability Market.

Looking ahead

In response to the Department for Education (DfE) Sustainability Initiative target to have in place Strategy and Sustainability Leads in all schools by 2025, we will seek to support the newly appointed Leads to link to those with experience in the role.

We will also look to increase participation in the 2024 SustFest Schools Week, as well as providing Climate Champions talks and promoting use of the Community thermal imaging camera in schools.

Statistics

Our Schools newsletter has >200 subscribers, including some from beyond the District (2023 >180).

Open Food Gardens

What it is

Open Food Gardens is a programme of local gardens open to visitors during the summer months. The programme is run by residents of the District who are passionate about growing food, and who have been sharing their experiences with hundreds of visitors to the food gardens, allotments and community growing projects since 2009.

What happened in the year

Due to a shortage of volunteers to organise helpers and garden owners, we were unable to run a full programme in 2023/24 but plan to relaunch the initiative in the coming year.

The St Albans District Fixers

What it is



The St Albans District Fixers team is an established project under the SSA banner. We have a core group of skilled amateur fixers ready to tackle the repair of all manner of portable electrical and electronic goods at the Repair Fairs we hold around the District. We also offer fabric and clothing repairs at most events.

Our events are free; however, we welcome voluntary donations according to the ability to pay. The donations are generally split between the venue (which generally does not charge for hire of the hall) and SSA. This helps cover the insurance and associated services. On average, each event raises about £70 for SSA.

Our overarching ambition is to help other local groups to set up their own ‘fixing community’. This partnership model to encourage more repair fairs across the district is beginning to take effect. In 2023 we assisted the Sopwell Eco-Stars in setting up their first event and they now manage the fairs themselves. We are also now supporting Sandridge Parish Council with their ambition to run repair fairs. This involves coaching potential fixers and co-managing their first fair (planned for early 2025). Initial enquiries have come from London Colney Parish Council, and we hope we can similarly support their ambitions to hold repair fairs or lunchtime cafés.

What happened in the year

We ran seven sessions during our year to March 2024, one in partnership with the Sopwell Eco-Stars. This is the maximum number of events we have capacity to hold in any one year.

We have a pool of over 30 fixers supported by people with other skills such as fabric repair. Our mentor scheme, which partners an experienced fixer with a new joiner, combined with our ‘watch one, help one and finally fix one’ approach, remains our operating model.

The most common items repaired have been power tools. We have also repaired treasured family heirlooms in the forms of old portable radios and ancient audio systems, as well as more mundane yet practical items such as toasters, vacuum cleaners, flat TV screens and computers.

The ‘ones that get away’ are primarily the branded capsule coffee machines, manufactured with sealed, plastic ‘close once’ bodies. It is a great pity to have items with such inbuilt obsolescence; our experience demonstrates how much further “right to repair” legislation

could help to address this. We therefore support the right to repair declaration:

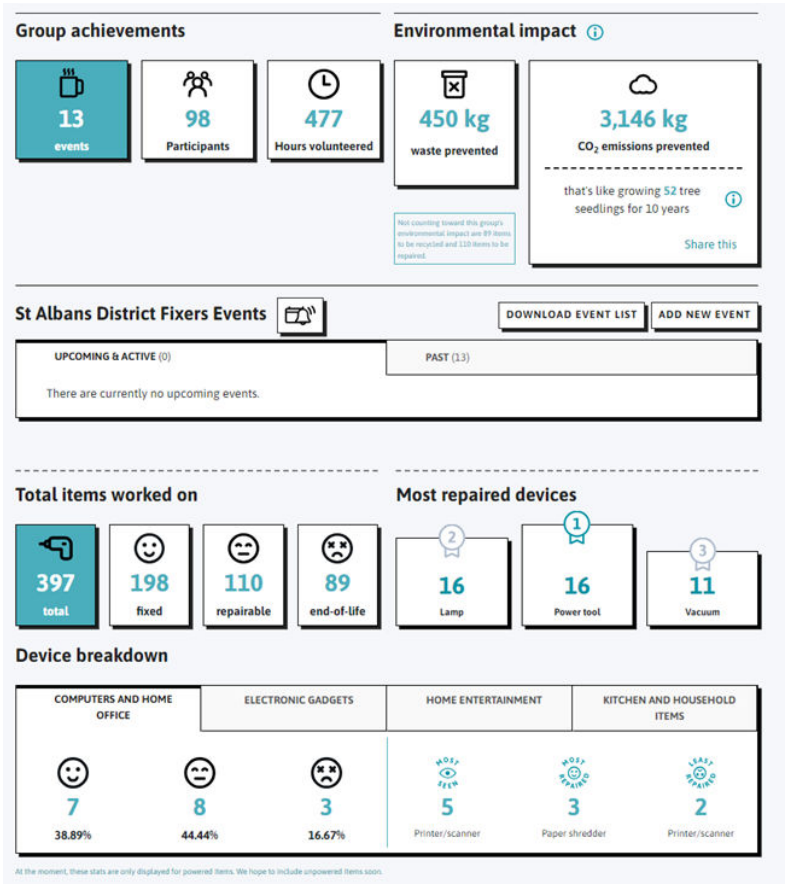
<https://therestartproject.org/news/repair-reuse-declaration/>

Some fixers prefer to help only at ‘their own’ local church or community venue, and the demand for repair fairs remains high. We welcome offers from volunteers, either as fixers or event helpers. Please do get in touch; a willingness to *give it a go* is the key attribute.

Future repair fairs, like all of our events, are listed at [Upcoming Events – Sustainable St Albans](#).

Statistics

Our events to date, as recorded on the Restart Project dashboard:



We estimate that the seven events from April 2023 to March 2024 prevented 203 kg of landfill by weight (previous four events, 121 kg) and 1,497 kg of CO₂ emissions (previous four events, 981 kg)*.

* Data may vary from dashboard above due to different reporting dates and periods.

We add our statistics to the impressive national totals at [Restarters](#).

Our relationship with Transition Network

What it is

[Transition Network](#) is an organisation which encourages and facilitates the creation of “transition town” groups and provides various forms of support to its autonomous members, primarily by non-financial means. As the “central body” the Transition Network is additionally able to seek funding for national initiatives.

“Transition”, in this context, means the shift from “business as usual” to a low-carbon and locally resilient economy. To expand on that:

“[Transition] is about communities stepping up to address the big challenges they face by starting local. By coming together, they are able to crowd-source solutions. They seek to nurture a caring culture, one focused on supporting each other, both as groups or as wider communities. ... In practice, [transition communities] are reclaiming the economy, sparking entrepreneurship, reimagining work, reskilling themselves and weaving webs of connection and support. It’s an approach that has spread now to over 50 countries, in thousands of groups: in towns, villages, cities, Universities, schools.

[Extract from Transition Network website]

Sustainable St Albans is a member of the Transition Network. Transition Network has no authority over the charity, which is controlled and directed by its own constitution and the trustees.

What happened in the year

We received one grant from the Transition Network, to support Meet Your Neighbours Projects incorporating Playing Out. The £5,000 full grant will be directed towards actions to support residents to connect with neighbours and arrange street-based activities, which build sustainable resilient street communities and improve children’s and adults’ mental and physical health and wellbeing.

The Green House, a centrally located, eco-friendly physical base (or “eco hub”) for which the charity received seed funding in the prior year to research existing hubs in other towns, has now been successfully launched. The Green House and the charity are independent entities, but with some overlap of governance to emphasise our collaborative intent and shared visions.



Grant funding by Transition Network was made possible by the financial support of the National Lottery.

Engaging with local government

We continue to value our close working relationships with local government.

Principal amongst these is with the St Albans City and District Council (“SADC”), and in particular our place on the group that is assisting the Council in the development of its Sustainability and Climate Crisis Strategy. We especially value our part in supporting the Council as it acts to reduce its own carbon footprint and in ensuring that the plan’s rather wider



objective, for the whole district to achieve its net zero carbon target by 2030, remains front and centre.

We also work with Harpenden Town Council (and the Harpenden Trust), Sandridge and other Parish Councils, Hertfordshire County Council and a number of County Councillors. All of these parties have at various times over the last few years provided grant funding to SSA.

What happened in the year

Alongside the Green House and the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, we formed an informal steering group that assisted SADC in bringing “St Albans Greener Together” into being.

This new Council initiative finally launched in the late Spring of 2024; we hope it will add significantly to the collective sustainability endeavours of our District. A key feature, which we instigated, is the plan to give not only residents but also any and all kinds of organisation in the community a place to sign up together and so be public about their commitment to a greener St Albans and District.

During 2023, the Council published a fresh draft of a new Local Plan for consultation. In short, we were pleased to see that the Climate Emergency was a fundamental theme of the document but, despite that, we felt that the Plan did not go far enough either in encouraging climate positive actions or in restraining carbon intensive activity. A number of current and former trustees put a significant amount of time into drawing up a formal response, which, after approval by our Board, was submitted on behalf of SSA. As at the date of reporting, we await the new, post consultation draft of the Local Plan, and intend to consider and respond when it is issued.

Our impacts

Our ecological footprint

The Trustees seek to minimise the charity's negative impact on the environment and have adopted policies that seek to address the environmental costs of internal meetings and of our events, with particular regard to travel, consumables and our choices of suppliers.

The carbon cost of society's digital footprint continues to be a concern. The charity has a content rich website, holds numerous internal meetings and events online, and communicates largely by email, including our regular newsletters.

The trustees will continue to develop the charity's environmental policies, to monitor - and seek to measure and minimise - our ecological footprint, including that associated with our website and related online channels.

Our positive impacts

In the notes above we have included various statistics which illustrate our "reach" and in the repair fair section, some direct measures of environmental impact.

However, we cannot reliably estimate how many individuals, households, groups, organisations or businesses have reduced their ecological footprints as a direct or indirect result of our work, let alone calculate their collective positive impact on the environment.

Nevertheless, we remain firmly of the view that the charity is making a difference in precisely these incalculable ways, and consider this report to be a fair summary of what has been achieved.

Membership of the charity

Our constitution includes a voting membership to ensure that the trustees are expressly accountable to the community of supporters. Individual supporters may become members of the charity. Members declare their active support for the charity's objectives and exercise certain governance duties, for example by voting at General Meetings on the appointment and re-appointment of trustees. Members receive no personal benefits, nor is there currently a membership subscription.

To find out more about membership please email us at info@sustainablestalbans.org

Statistics

On 1 September 2024 we had 98 members (21 September 2023 97).

Thank you

The trustees would like to thank everyone who has assisted Sustainable St Albans in any way during this period, and would particularly like to record our thanks to everyone who has volunteered their help. These thanks extend also to our contractors, who give commitments of time and expertise that we likely could not afford at commercial rates.

Looking forward

We believe that the charity and some of its projects are by now part of the fabric of the District, and we are confident in our capability to at least continue our current projects.

However, like all organisations with a similar focus and structure, we face two primary challenges. The first is to keep the need for action on the climate crisis in people's minds while our world is beset by so many other concerns. The second is to have a bigger impact, both individually and collectively.

Our task is to find the ways and means to meet those challenges, and our priorities include:

- continuing to engage with the wider community in order to broaden our reach;
- enhancing our relationships with the Council and other influential local bodies;
- ensuring that we work to find synergies with new local groups that have similar aims; and
- maintaining an attractive and effective portfolio of projects and events.

Peter Block, Jack Easton, Ollie Eggerton, Lesley Flowers, Duncan Gibbons, Laura Grenier, Sikiru O. Ismail, Ruth Montague James and Jill Watson

(The trustees)

16 October 2024

Trustees Report

This trustees’ report for the year ended 31 March 2024 is prepared in compliance with the requirements of the Charities SORP, taking advantage of the exemptions and simplified disclosures permitted to a smaller charity.

Objectives and activities

The objects of the charity are:

- 1) to promote the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment, acting primarily within the City and District of St Albans, by promoting, for the benefit of the public, the sustainable use of resources; and
- 2) to advance the education of the public in the sustainable use of resources and the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment, acting primarily within the City and District of St Albans.

In determining what activities to undertake, the trustees have had regard to the Charity Commission’s guidance on public benefit.

Activities, achievements and performance

The principal *charitable activities* undertaken during the year and the charity’s achievements and (non-financial) performance are described in the Annual Review (pages 2 to 19 above).

Financial review

Our income and expenditure for the year is summarised in the Statement of Financial Activities on page 24, with more detail shown in note 8 on page 33. Overall these show moderate levels of income, primarily for SustFest and Playing Out. Expenditure for SustFest was less than income received during the year due to timing of disbursements relating to the June 2024 Expo. The significant restricted funds surplus is primarily due to the release of the 2023/24 portion of the substantial funds previously raised and provided towards community engagement.

The 31 March 2024 year end position is shown in the balance sheet on page 25. This shows a sound financial position, due primarily to the surplus unrestricted funds brought forward and release of community engagement funds referred to above.

Reserves policy

Our current policy is to maintain unrestricted, undesignated reserves of between £4,000 and £8,000, so that we can undertake unfunded activities from time to time.

At the year end the charity had unrestricted reserves of approximately £11,000 (2023 £11,500). Unrestricted cash at the year end amounted to £9,301 (2023 £7,601).

Structure, governance and management

The charity is constituted as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) with voting members other than its charity trustees. It is governed by a constitution that was prepared from the Charity Commission model constitution for a CIO with a voting membership, adapted only in the sense that the founding trustees determined which of the model’s alternative provisions should be adopted.

No external body has a right to appoint any trustee. The appointment of trustees is provided for in section 13 of the constitution thus:

- (1) At every subsequent annual general meeting of the members of the CIO, one-third of the charity trustees shall retire from office. If the number of charity trustees is not three or a multiple of three, then the number nearest to one-third shall retire from office, but if there is only one charity trustee, he or she shall retire;
- (2) The charity trustees to retire by rotation shall be those who have been longest in office since their last appointment or reappointment. If any trustees were last appointed or reappointed on the same day those to retire shall (unless they otherwise agree among themselves) be determined by lot;
- (3) The vacancies so arising may be filled by the decision of the members at the annual general meeting; any vacancies not filled at the annual general meeting may be filled as provided in sub-clause [4] of this clause;
- (4) The members or the charity trustees may at any time decide to appoint a new charity trustee, whether in place of a charity trustee who has retired or been removed in accordance with clause 15 (Retirement and removal of charity trustees), or as an additional charity trustee, provided that the limit specified in clause 12(3) on the number of charity trustees [*which is 12*] would not as a result be exceeded; and
- (5) A person so appointed by the members of the CIO shall retire in accordance with the provisions of sub-clauses (2) and (3) of this clause. A person so appointed by the charity trustees shall retire at the conclusion of the next annual general meeting after the date of his or her appointment, and shall not be counted for the purpose of determining which of the charity trustees is to retire by rotation at that meeting.

Three new trustees were appointed during the year, and one following the end of the reporting period. The appointments followed informal meetings with existing trustees, attending two trustee meetings as an observer, and a formal interview.

We will approach the recruitment of new trustees in the same way for the foreseeable future, with an emphasis on ensuring that potential trustees have the fullest possible understanding of the charity and the way it works before their appointment. The trustees

Sustainable St Albans
Annual report and financial statements – (statutory) Trustees' report
For the year ended 31 March 2024

Page | 22

always welcome expressions of interest from individuals who might wish to become trustees.

Reference, administrative and trustee details

The charity is the successor organisation to Transition St Albans which was founded in 2009, and formally dissolved on 6 April 2020.

Sustainable St Albans is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation that was registered by the Charity Commission on 19 May 2017, with registration number 1173118. Sustainable St Albans has no premises of its own, but correspondence can be sent to its registered address, 21 Marlborough Gate, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3TX, the home of one of the trustees. The trustees, and therefore the charity, can also be contacted by email using the address trustees@sustainablestalbens.org


The trustees that acted during the year were:

- Peter Block
- Helen Burrridge (resigned 6 December 2023)
- Jack Easton
- Ollie Eggenton (appointed 28 February 2024)
- Lesley Flowers
- Sarah Gataora (resigned 6 December 2023)
- Duncan Gibbons (appointed 21 September 2023)
- Laura Grenier (appointed 18 May 2023)
- Ruth Montague James
- Jill Watson

Dr Sikiru O. Ismail was appointed a trustee on 19 June 2024, after the end of the reporting period.

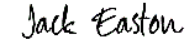
Approval

This trustees' report was approved by the current trustees as a body on 16 October 2024 and signed on their behalf by:

Signed by:

D58205926E1A445...

Laura Grenier

Trustee and Treasurer

Signed by:

0E83C80C6C7C4A7...

Jack Easton

Trustee and Chair

Sustainable St Albans**Annual report and financial statements – Independent examiner's report****For the year ended 31 March 2024**

Page | 23

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Sustainable St Albans

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of Sustainable St Albans (the Charity) for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the trustees of the Charity you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the Charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- 1) accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act; or
- 2) the accounts do not accord with the accounting records; or
- 3) the accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed by:

92F91DEDED74409...

Richard Capaldi
St Albans

11 October 2024

Sustainable St Albans
Annual report and financial statements
For the year ended 31 March 2024

Page | 24

Statement of financial activities

		1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024			1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023		
	Notes	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total funds	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total funds
		£	£	£	£	£	£
Income from							
Donations and legacies		2,272	27,277	29,549	2,237	12,692	14,929
Charitable activities		-	8,000	8,000	-	1,250	1,250
Other trading activities		49	-	49	1,045	-	1,045
Investments		119	-	119	107	-	107
Total income	4, 8	2,440	35,277	37,717	3,389	13,942	17,331
Expenditure on							
Raising funds	4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Charitable activities		2,634	15,602	18,236	2,120	38,964	41,084
Total expenditure	4, 8	2,634	15,602	18,236	2,120	38,964	41,084
Net income (or deficit)		(194)	19,675	19,481	1,269	(25,022)	(23,753)
Release of deferred income		-	-	-	(352)	352	-
Total funds brought forward		11,475	8,784	20,259	10,558	33,454	44,012
Total funds carried forward		11,281	28,459	39,740	11,475	8,784	20,259


Sustainable St Albans
Annual report and financial statements
For the year ended 31 March 2024

Page | 25

Balance Sheet at

	Notes	31 March 2024 £	31 March 2023 £
Fixed Assets			
Tangible fixed assets	5	5,468	5,485
Current assets			
Debtors	6	168	2,934
Cash at bank		36,066	23,820
Total current assets		36,234	26,754
Liabilities			
Creditors*	7	(1,962)	(11,980)
<i>*amounts falling due within one year</i>			
Net current assets		34,272	14,774
Total assets less liabilities	9	39,740	20,259
Funds			
Unrestricted funds	8	11,281	11,475
Restricted funds	8	28,459	8,784
Total charity funds		39,740	20,259

These financial statements were approved by the trustees as a body on 16 October 2024 and signed on their behalf by:

Signed by:

D68206926E1A445...

Laura Grenier

Trustee and Treasurer

Signed by:

0E83C80C6C7C4A7...

Jack Easton

Trustee

1. Administrative details

Basic administrative details are set out in the statutory trustees' report on page 20.

2. Basis of preparation

Applicable accounting regulation

These financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention with items recognised at cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant note(s).

These financial statements have been prepared in compliance with the Charities Act, the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Charities SORP (FRS 102), taking advantage of the exemptions and simplifications available to smaller charities, including the exemption from preparing a statement of cash flows. The charity is a "Public Benefit Entity" as defined by FRS 102.

Adoption of the going concern basis

The trustees have prepared these financial statements on a going concern basis. The trustees have made their assessment of the charity's ability to continue as a going concern by having regard to the following key factors:

- The charity has neither premises nor staff. The only material, recurring, unfunded operating costs are public liability insurance, and the costs of IT and communications facilities, such as our website and online event or meeting accounts.
- The trustees seek specific funding for any charitable activities that will require material expenditure.
- The charity has a satisfactory level of reserves.

Restricted and designated funds

In accordance with the requirements of the Charities SORP, restricted and unrestricted funds are classified and presented separately. Funds are restricted when received on terms that limit their use to identifiable and specified purposes. The restriction may be identifiable from the terms of the appeal or request for funding, or from the terms of the grant disbursement, or both.

Where a donation is received under an expressed but non-binding preference, these are unrestricted funds, but the trustees designate that such funds are held and used for the expressed purpose and towards allocated support costs. When that activity is completed, any residual surplus is available to charity for use in any of its charitable activities.

The trustees may also designate existing unrestricted funds so as to earmark them for an intended future activity.

The designation of unrestricted funds from any source is not binding on the trustees and may be reversed on the completion of an activity or otherwise if the trustees consider that it is in the best interests of the charity to do so.

Offsetting

There has been no offsetting of assets and liabilities, or income and expenses, unless required or permitted by the FRS 102 SORP or by FRS 102, except for the immaterial fundraising costs discussed in note 4.2.

Significant judgments and estimates

No significant judgment was necessary in applying the accounting policies below when preparing the 2024 or 2023 financial statements, nor are there any estimated amounts that might require material adjustment on their final determination.

3. Accounting policies

3.1 Income from grants and donations

Income from grants is recognised in full when the charity becomes entitled to a determinable amount of grant and it is also probable that the funding will be received. *(This can and often does have the effect that income is included in the financial statements in an earlier accounting period than the related expenditure.)*

Income from other donations is recognised when it is received.

3.2 Donated goods and services

Where it is practical to identify the value of donated goods or services, their estimated fair value is included in income when the goods or services are received, if in addition it is also material.

Except to the extent of specific contracts to enable larger projects to take place, the charity relies very substantially on the contributions of unpaid volunteers (including trustees when acting as volunteers) to carry out its activities. It is not practical to make a reliable estimate of the value of volunteer services received, and accordingly the hugely significant and essential contribution of volunteers is not given a monetary value in the financial statements.

Other than volunteer time, examples of the types of donated goods and services that are not recognised in these accounts include: free use of commercial premises (occasionally, for public or trustee meetings), specific skills donated by commercial organisations (again, occasionally), time given by guest speakers at events, hosting of organisational and some operational meetings by volunteers, and the travel and domestic costs of volunteers whilst active in the charity's affairs.

3.3 Income from commercial sponsors

When a commercial sponsor is rewarded with a substantive degree of publicity, such sponsorship income is regarded as the sale of advertising and promotional services by the charity.

The income is apportioned over the duration of the promotional period, which for practical purposes is regarded as the period from the publication of the event programme until the end of the relevant event.

3.4 Income from the supply of charitable services

Where the charity has a contract to supply particular services that are charitable activities, income is recognised to the extent that the charity has completed the contracted activity. Any funds received in advance of completing part or all of the specified activity is deferred and included in the balance sheet as a creditor.

3.5 Income from event entry charges

Income from ticket sales, and from similar charges for other forms of participation in events, such as market stall pitch fees, is recognised in the period in which the event takes place.

3.6 Expenditure

Expenditure is written off in the period in which it is incurred, except to the extent that an asset has been purchased for continuing use by the charity.

3.7 Tangible Fixed Assets

The charity owns a small number of fixed assets provided to the various projects it operates.

Playing Out resources comprise road signs, which are expected to have a long life, vinyl road closed signs and “kitbags” of equipment which are loaned to the organisers of playing out sessions for as long as their street remains part of the scheme.

Other equipment comprises a PAT tester for use at repair fairs, a white board, card reader and peripheral equipment.

Tangible fixed assets are depreciated to apportion their costs over their estimated useful lives as follows:

Signs	5 to 10 years
Kitbags	5 years
Thermal imaging camera	5 years
Other equipment	5 years

Tangible fixed assets are reviewed for impairment as at the year end and any identified impairment loss is charged to expenditure as additional depreciation. (Impairment losses to 31 March 2024 - £nil, to 31 March 2023 – £nil.)

3.8 Financial instruments

The charity is party only to certain basic financial instruments (as defined in paragraph 10.7 of FRS 102), being cash at bank, short term debtors and creditors for expenditure incurred, and complies with the accounting requirements applicable to financial instruments. These are accounted for at the transaction price, which is also the expected settlement amount.

Financial assets are reviewed for impairment as at the year end and any identified impairment loss is charged to expenditure. (Impairment losses to 31 March 2024 – £nil, to 31 March 2023 – £nil.)

4. Additional notes on income and expenditure

4.1 Income

The income attributable to each charitable fund is shown in note 8.

‘Donations and legacies’ is a mandatory caption. This category of income includes grants; no legacy income was received during the year (2023: £nil).

(Local) **government grants** received in the year to 31 March 2024 totalled £4,050; £500 towards Playing Out and £3,550 towards SustFest (2023: £5,400; £1,500 towards Playing Out, £600 towards Repair Fairs, £2,300 towards SustFest 22 and £1,000 towards SuStFest23).

Income from *charitable activities* comprises income earned from contracts or performance-related grants which have conditions that specify the provision by Sustainable St Albans of particular (charitable) goods or services. In the year ended 31 March 2024 £8,000 was recognised (2023 £1,250) relating to a community engagement contract with St Albans District Council, which ended in the year.

Income from *‘other trading activities’* comprises trading activities that raise funds for the charity, such as ticket sales relating to events and corporate sponsorships.

Income from *‘Investments’* comprises bank deposit account interest.

4.2 Expenditure

The expenditure attributable to each charitable fund is shown in note 8. Included in expenditure on charitable activities is a grant of £300 to the St Albans based charity the AKIFA Foundation (2023 £nil). Expenditure was otherwise incurred only on charitable activities, fundraising costs and support costs.

Fundraising costs

The charity’s fundraising efforts, principally applying for grants and seeking sponsorships, are undertaken by volunteers; their contribution is not recognised in these accounts, in accordance with the accounting policy set out in note 3.2. Donations and ticket sales that are received via online platforms net of handling fees are recognised in income at the net amount. For the years ended 31 March 2024 and 2023, handling fees were trivial in amount.

Sustainable St Albans**Annual report and financial statements – Notes to the financial statements****For the year ended 31 March 2024**

Page | 30

Support costs

The charity's principal support costs are public liability insurance, IT costs (including domain, website, online conferencing and messaging services), general promotion, and other costs such as the AGM and other meetings not directly attributable to the activities that are separately analysed in these accounts. Most of the restricted funds currently in hand may not be used on general costs, and so, with that limitation, aggregate support costs are allocated in approximate proportion to the time spent on the activities undertaken in the year.

	2024	2023
	£	£
Governance (the cost of the AGM)	-	40
IT and communications	467	374
Other general publicity	329	-
Insurances	582	562
Other administration	857	612
Total support costs	2,235	1,588

Support costs are allocated as follows:

	2024	2023
	£	£
SuStFest	688	454
Sustainable Markets	343	227
Community education (restricted fund)	688	455
Our planet our future	172	113
Thermal imaging cameras	172	113
Open food gardens	-	113
Repair fairs	172	113
	2,235	1,588

Sustainable St Albans**Annual report and financial statements – Notes to the financial statements****For the year ended 31 March 2024**

Page | 31

5. Tangible fixed assets

	TIC	Repair Fairs*	Playing Out	Markets	Total	
	£	£	£	£	£	
			Road signs	Kit bags		
Cost at the beginning of the year	2,309	633	4,339	1,321	-	8,602
Additions	-	181	-	-	1,368	1,549
Cost at the end of the year	2,309	814	4,339	1,321	1,368	10,151
Depreciation at the beginning of the year	924	143	1,114	936	-	3,117
Depreciation charged in the year	462	146	404	264	290	1,566
Depreciation at the end of the year	1,386	289	1,518	1,200	290	4,683
Net book value, end of the year	923	525	2,821	121	1,078	5,468
Net book value, beginning of the year	1,385	490	3,225	385	-	5,485

*Repair Fairs includes other office equipment with a net book value of £33 (2023 £49).

6. Debtors

	2024	2023
	£	£
Prepayments	-	1,800
Accrued income	168	1,134
	168	2,934

7. Creditors, amounts falling due within one year

	2024	2023
	£	£
Deferred income	-	8,000
Other creditors - accruals	1,962	3,980
	<div>1,962</div>	<div>11,980</div>

Analysis of deferred income	2024	2023
	£	£
At the beginning of the year	8,000	-
Released to income in the period	(8,000)	-
Received during the period	-	8,000
	<div>-</div>	<div>8,000</div>

The deferred income relates to the SADC community engagement contract, which completed in the current financial year.

Sustainable St Albans**Annual report and financial statements – Notes to the financial statements****For the year ended 31 March 2024**

Page | 33

8. Analysis of charitable funds

Year ended 31 March 2024	Fund balances				Fund balances
	Brought forward	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Carried forward
	£	£	£	£	£
RESTRICTED FUNDS					
SuStFest 23	1,500	787	(4,203)	1,916	-
SustFest24	-	14,050	(2,860)	-	11,190
Community engagement	90	8,000	(1,088)	(1,916)	5,086
Playing Out	5,211	12,440	(6,659)	-	10,992
Schools	944	-	-	-	944
Our Planet Our Future	297	-	-	(297)	-
Repair fairs	393	-	(146)	-	247
Green House seed fund	349	-	(349)	-	-
TOTAL Restricted funds	8,784	35,277	(15,305)	(297)	28,459
UNRESTRICTED FUNDS					
Designated funds / (deficits)					
SustFest23		-	(344)	667	
SustFest24		-	(344)	-	
Community engagement		-	-	-	
Our Planet Our Future		-	(427)	297	
Sustainable Markets		49	(688)	-	
Thermal imaging cameras		295	(956)	-	
Open food gardens		30	-	-	
Repair fairs		471	(172)	-	
TOTAL Designated funds		845	(2,931)	964	
General funds		1,595	-	(667)	
TOTAL Unrestricted funds	11,475	2,440	(2,931)	297	11,281
TOTAL FUNDS	20,259	37,717	(18,236)	-	39,740

Sustainable St Albans**Annual report and financial statements – Notes to the financial statements****For the year ended 31 March 2024**

Page | 34

Year ended 31 March 2023	Fund balances				Fund balances
	Brought forward	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Carried forward
	£	£	£	£	£
RESTRICTED FUNDS					
SuStFest22	1,400	4,792	(6,544)	352	-
SuStFest23	-	1,500	-	-	1,500
Playing Out	7,021	3,000	(4,810)	-	5,211
Community engagement	23,752	3,550	(27,212)	-	90
Schools	944	-	-	-	944
Our Planet Our Future	337	-	(40)	-	297
Repair fairs	-	600	(207)	-	393
Green House seed fund	-	500	(151)	-	349
TOTAL Restricted funds	33,454	13,942	(38,964)	352	8,784
UNRESTRICTED FUNDS					
Designated funds / (deficits)					
SuStFest21 and earlier		-	-	(352)	
SuStFest22		-	(227)	-	
SustFest23		-	(227)	-	
Community engagement		-	-	-	
Our Planet Our Future		4	(193)	-	
Sustainable Markets		1,045	(254)	-	
Thermal imaging cameras		299	(992)	-	
Open food gardens		-	(114)	-	
Repair fairs		201	(113)	-	
TOTAL Designated funds		1,549	(2,120)	(352)	
General funds		1,840	-	-	
TOTAL Unrestricted funds	10,558	3,389	(2,120)	(352)	11,475
TOTAL FUNDS	44,012	17,331	(41,084)	-	20,259

Sustainable St Albans
Annual report and financial statements – Notes to the financial statements
For the year ended 31 March 2024

Page | 35

9. Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total funds	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total funds
	2024	2024	2024	2023	2023	2023
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Fixed Assets						
Tangible fixed assets	2,001	3,467	5,468	1,434	4,051	5,485
Current assets						
Debtors	168	-	168	2,934	-	2,934
Cash at bank	9,301	26,765	36,066	7,601	16,219	23,820
Total current assets	9,469	26,765	36,234	10,535	16,219	26,754
Current liabilities						
Deferred income	-	-	-	-	(8,000)	(8,000)
Other creditors - accruals	(189)	(1,773)	(1,962)	(494)	(3,486)	(3,980)
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	(189)	(1,773)	(1,962)	(494)	(11,486)	(11,980)
Total assets less liabilities	11,281	28,459	39,740	11,475	8,784	20,259

10. Related parties and related party transactions

The trustees consider that the charity's related parties are the trustees, and persons closely connected to them (as defined more precisely in the Charities SORP (FRS 102)).

Trustees

The trustees receive no remuneration from the charity for their work as trustees (and nor do these financial statements include as a donation any amount in recognition of the value of the time that they have given). Trustees are authorised to settle expenditure directly where this is necessary; when this has occurred, they have been reimbursed by the charity.

No trustee has been re-imbursed for expenses incurred in fulfilling their duties as a trustee.

Payment to trustees by a charity for (other) services received is permitted by the Charity Commission, subject to appropriate safeguards. Payment to the trustees of Sustainable St Albans by the charity for services received is permitted by the charity's constitution, which in this regard adopts the Charity Commission's standard wording. The trustees have careful regard to the relevant Charity Commission guidance before contracting to acquire any services from any trustee.

No trustee has provided any paid service to the charity in either of the years ended 31 March 2024 or 2023.

The trustees and persons closely connected to them donated a total of £181 to the charity in the year (2023 £250).