

Impact Report 2025/26



ecobirmingham
Inspiring Positive Action

Charity Registration Number 1177761



Introduction

This year we say a heartfelt thank you to every funder, donor, partner, member of staff, trustee and volunteer who made our work possible. Your continued commitment is the reason Birmingham's communities are becoming greener, fairer and healthier.

2025/26 marked the final year of our four-year strategy, a natural moment to take stock of how far we've come, and the first full year based at Midlands Arts Centre, which has opened up new collaborations with creative and community organisations across the city.

We delivered activity in new wards and worked closely with local councillors to help their constituents access environmental activities and build awareness of sustainable living, creating a ripple effect of positive behaviour change that reaches well beyond the people we meet directly.

We deepened our collaborative approach, working alongside organisations equally committed to the climate emergency, and continued to grow our flagship Building Greener Communities programme in Sparkhill and Allens Cross, building practical skills, improving wellbeing, and raising awareness of sustainable living from the ground up.

We were honoured to receive One Planet Living® Leader Recognition from Bioregional this year. An endorsement of the quality of our approach, and of our ongoing commitment to helping community organisations understand and improve their own environmental and social impact. As ever, we are led by our values of compassion, transparency, openness, non-judgement and positivity.

Together, we've supported healthier communities, stronger connections and positive action for people and the planet. Alongside the outcomes highlighted in this report, we've created social value by building skills, confidence, community resilience and opportunities for people to take an active role in shaping a more sustainable future.



Kam Bola

Kam Bola
Chief Executive Officer



By 2050, Birmingham residents will have the tools and opportunities they all deserve to live healthier, happier and more sustainable lives.

Our Vision

We will spend more time in nature, caring for our local green spaces and reconnecting with the environment around us. Our diets will be diverse, nutritious and rooted in local, sustainable food systems that support our health and our communities.

We will encourage more children to walk and cycle and inspire car owners to consider alternative modes of transport, especially for journeys under one mile, improving our collective wellbeing and the air quality around us. We will live in warmer, more energy-efficient homes, and choose to spend our time and money supporting high streets, independent retailers and neighbourhood businesses. Together, we will build a city where sustainability is second nature, and where everyone can thrive.

Aim

To work with strategic partners to inspire 25% of Birmingham households to embark on a Sustainable Living Journey, fostering long-term behaviour change that makes sustainable choices the norm in everyday life.

How we measure it

We use the 10 principles of the One Planet Living® (OPL) framework to measure the impact of our work across the city. Rather than tracking activities in isolation, we ask participants the same set of impact questions across every programme, so we can see the change a cooking class, a cycle ride or an energy visit makes to a person's life, not just how many people turned up.

Our work also aligns directly with five UN Sustainable Development Goals.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS





Highlights

29,855

direct beneficiaries

71,652

indirect beneficiaries

41

wards worked in

7,250

attendances at 539 sessions

807

volunteer hours given
by 25 volunteers

56

organisations supported

Dig one layer beneath those totals, and this is what impact they add up to for the city.

7,152

tonnes of CO₂e saved

167

extra years of healthy
life expectancy

£7.9m+

social value benefit to society

Social value is calculated as £2.7m from how and where we operate (a return of £6.53 for every £1 spent), £1.9m from carbon reduction, and £3.3m in long-term benefit from extra years of healthy life expectancy among Active Travel participants.

Who we reached

We directly helped 29,855 people and reached a further 71,652 indirectly, across 41 wards in Birmingham. 13 of those wards (32%) are among the 10% most deprived in the UK, and a further 8 (20%) are among the 20% most deprived. This is where our work is needed most.

55%

attending their first
ecobirmingham event

63%

Identified as female

20%

of participants had a disability

We are reaching a genuinely diverse cross-section of the city.

28% of participants were of Asian heritage, 9% Afro-Caribbean, 36% White British/Irish, 10% mixed heritage, 4% other ethnicities and 13% preferred not to say



Where we work and why

10% most deprived

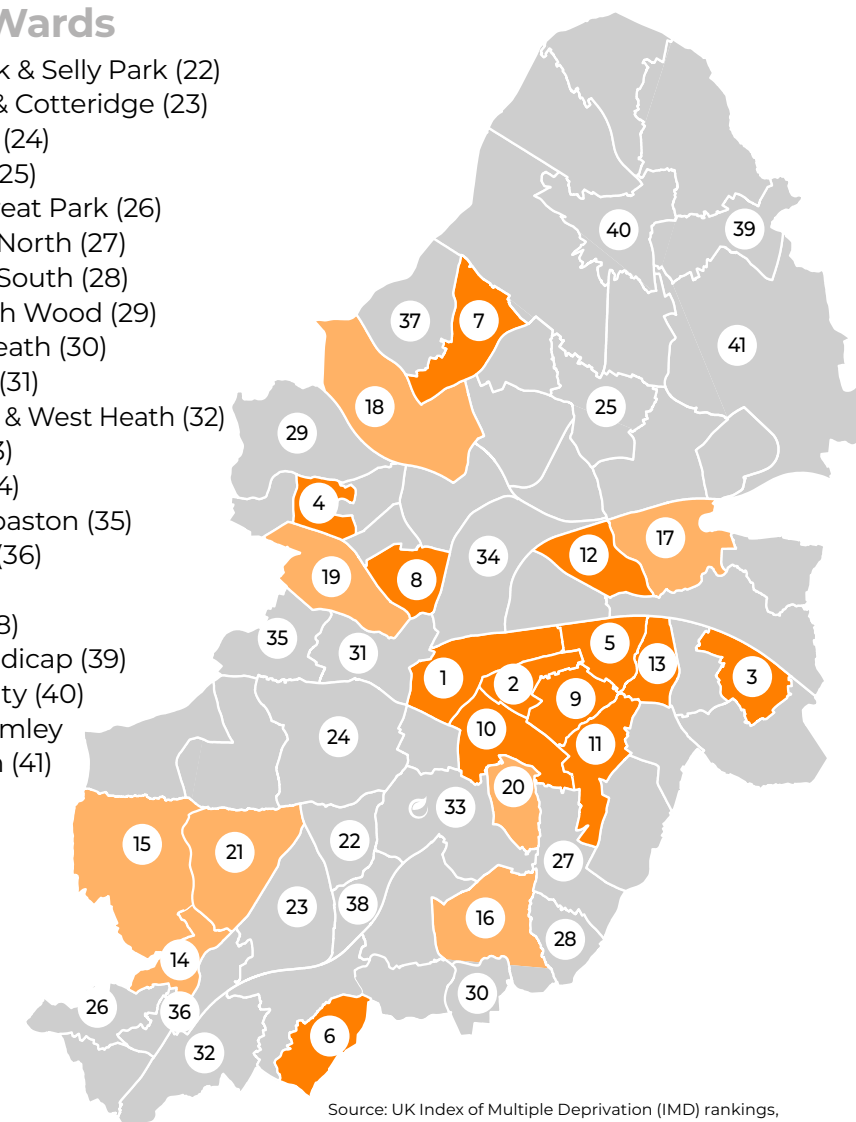
Bordesley & Highgate (1)
Bordesley Green (2)
Garretts Green (3)
Handsworth (4)
Heartlands (5)
Kings Norton South (6)
Kingstanding (7)
Newtown (8)
Small Heath (9)
Sparkbrook & Balsall Heath East (10)
Tyseley & Hay Mills (11)
Ward End (12)
Yardley West & Stechford (13)

20% most deprived

Allens Cross (14)
Bartley Green (15)
Billesley (16)
Bromford & Hodgehill (17)
Perry Barr (18)
Soho & Jewellery Quarter (19)
Sparkhill (20)
Weoley & Selly Oak (21)

Other Wards

Bournbrook & Selly Park (22)
Bournville & Cotteridge (23)
Edgbaston (24)
Erdington (25)
Frankley Great Park (26)
Hall Green North (27)
Hall Green South (28)
Handsworth Wood (29)
Highters Heath (30)
Ladywood (31)
Longbridge & West Heath (32)
Moseley (33)
Nechells (34)
North Edgbaston (35)
Northfield (36)
Oscott (37)
Stirchley (38)
Sutton Reddick (39)
Sutton Trinity (40)
Sutton Walmley & Minworth (41)



Source: UK Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) rankings, applied to ward boundaries worked in during 2025/26.

Two wards sit at the heart of our work, Sparkhill and Allens Cross, home to our flagship Building Greener Communities programme, delivered in long-term partnership with our anchor organisations, The Springfield Project and Allens Cross Community Association.

Partnerships that multiply our reach

Three citywide partnerships sit behind much of our work.

Birmingham Community Action Network (B:CAN).

The coalition we work through to grow our energy advice services and reach more residents facing fuel poverty across the city.

Birmingham Voluntary Service Council (BVSC).

Partners in more energy advice and represented on our Building Greener Communities Advisory Board.

Birmingham Faiths for Eco Action. A multi-faith partnership linking mosques, gurdwaras, churches and temples to community-led climate action, and the foundation for work like our Energy Club at Adam Mosque.



Impact

The difference we made

Six ways we helped Birmingham residents live greener, fairer and healthier lives this year including our flagship programme, *Building Greener Communities*.



Warmer homes, lower energy bills

For many of the people we work with, rising energy bills aren't an abstract worry, they're the difference between heating a home and going without.

Our energy advice ranges from light-touch pop-up sessions to in-depth phone consultations and home visits, giving people practical, personalised steps to save money and stay warm.

This year we built a regular presence in mosques, churches, food banks and community centres across the city including the Centres for Warmth project in Sutton Coldfield. Advice reached people where they already felt comfortable, rather than asking them to come to us. Much of that reach was made possible through partnerships focused on tackling fuel poverty and improving energy efficiency.

- ✓ 2,038 attendances
- 👤 1,990 participants
- 💬 278 sessions
- 📍 40 wards

98%

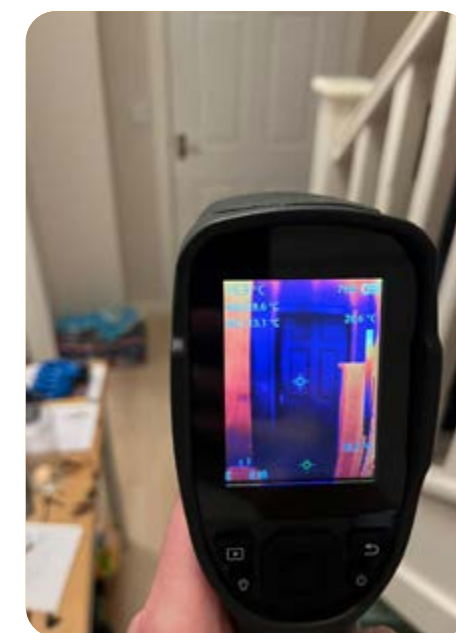
identified at least one action to reduce energy use

81%

increased their knowledge of energy-saving measures

60%

increased confidence to take action



Left: Energy advisor delivering a home visit. Above: Thermal imaging camera in use.



From a six-week course to a community of energy champions

At Adam Mosque, our partnership with the Energy Club went further than a single session. Volunteers were trained as energy champions, confident to guide others, share materials and point community members toward further support so the benefit continues long after our team leaves.

Through our Building Greener Communities project, funding also supported physical retrofit measures such as insulation, cooling measures and energy-efficient devices at both anchor organisations' buildings, alongside free energy advice for local residents.



Above: Energy advice at community organisation.

The impact

A community at a mosque that no longer depends on us because it now has its own trained energy champions to carry the knowledge forward.



Through our weekly sessions, brothers and sisters came together with real enthusiasm and a strong desire to learn. People didn't just attend, they engaged, asked questions, and took practical steps to reduce their energy bills and improve their homes. One achievement has been training our local volunteers as energy champions. These brothers and sisters are now confident to guide others, share learning materials, and direct community members to further advice and support. This means the benefit does not stop with the sessions but continues within the community.

Dr Qiam, Energy Club at Adam Mosque

Healthier, happier and more active

Time outdoors and time being active go hand in hand with better mental and physical health and wellbeing.

Our participants tell us that consistently. Across all our activities, 62% of participants felt their health and wellbeing had improved, and people intended to increase their physical activity by 50 minutes a week on average.

- 453 attendances
- 285 participants
- 76 sessions
- 4 wards

62%

felt health & wellbeing improved

80%

were more likely to walk, scoot or cycle

77%

improved their ability to cycle

Through our partnership with Cycling UK's Big Bike Revival and The Hub on the Green, we ran a three-month programme of confidence building cycle tuition and led rides for people aged 16 to 65. We also delivered a six-week walking programme in Allens Cross combining route-finding, nature connection and community litter-picking.

Below, left: Dr Bike session.
Below, right: Litter picking.





Giving up the car, and giving back

Andy retired recently and was looking for somewhere he could volunteer and make a difference. He's cycled most of his life and has given up his own car because, in his words, cycling is simply healthier, faster and more fun. He now volunteers weekly, leading rides for ecobirmingham.



One rider who wasn't confident at all was encouraged and supported throughout the evening ride. Their smile at the end was priceless. One of the cyclists who came to the Thursday evening rides really struggled on the first two sessions but kept at it and has now got the confidence to both walk and cycle when they weren't before.

Andy, Active Travel volunteer



Lisa that ride was fabulous, thank you! It has inspired me that I can travel much further than I thought on my bike by just linking up green spaces. Looking forward to exploring more soon. I would already like to do it again.

Sophie, Led Ride participant

72% of Active Travel participants intended to reduce short car journeys of under a mile, cutting their average from 2.36 journeys a week down to 1.24. A 47% reduction creating positive impact air quality and reducing congestion.

The impact

Riders who couldn't cycle at all twelve months ago are now confident enough to ride independently and a retired volunteer found a new sense of purpose helping them get there.



Reconnecting with nature

Our Creative Learning programme connects people with nature and biodiversity.

Wild Holiday Bunch booked up again this year, and we introduced two new ways in. Nocturnal Wild Bunch is an evening forest school for families to connect with nature at dusk, and Young Bunch is a screen-free holiday club built specifically for teenagers aged 12 to 15; an age group most outdoor provision overlooks.

✓ 1,821 attendances

👤 923 participants

💬 126 sessions

📍 9 wards

83%

of children learnt something about nature

100%

of parents said it reinforced the value of nature

98%

of parents felt their child learnt something new



Above: Children at Wild Holiday Bunch forest school session.



Building confidence, one bug-finder at a time

Mariam began volunteering because she wanted to work with people and nature but wasn't sure how to get started practically. She now regularly supports activities for groups of children.



My confidence has definitely grown since I started volunteering. At first, I was quite nervous about leading activities and speaking in front of groups of kids. Now I feel much more comfortable talking to people, not just children, but group leaders and parents as well. The kids were making bug-finders out of empty toilet paper rolls, and a little girl showed me what she'd written on top of hers: 'Mariam and Poppy best friends!' I think that was the cutest thing ever, to be honest. The small gestures from kids really mean the most.

Mariam, Creative Learning volunteer



This has been the only suitable activity my teenage son has been able to access all summer. He engaged fully for the whole time, which is not something he has been given the opportunity to do before.

Parent, Young Bunch

The impact

A teenager builds her confidence through learning how to help others and pass on skills. Learning a lot about nature and the workplace has inspired her to take more environmental action.



Above: Mariam supporting children learning outdoors.



Above: Children learning about the natural world.



Growing food and eating well

Food connects almost everything we do. Health, waste, budgets and culture all meet on a plate.

Our cooking workshops in Allens Cross, boosted this year by the addition of hugely popular air fryer sessions, taught practical skills for reducing waste and energy alongside healthier eating.

- ✓ 517 attendances
- 👤 281 participants
- ⋯ 28 sessions
- 📍 4 wards

71%

improved their knowledge of reducing food waste

75%

now throw away less food

32%

have started growing their own food

Our Sow & Grow sessions sent people home with seasonal growing guidance and starter packs. A Meat-Free Monday campaign with The Springfield Project engaged staff, volunteers and the local community, resulting in 51 pledges to go meat-free every Monday for a month. In Balsall Heath, six gardening sessions with Share Community gave women lasting maintenance skills for their own outdoor space.

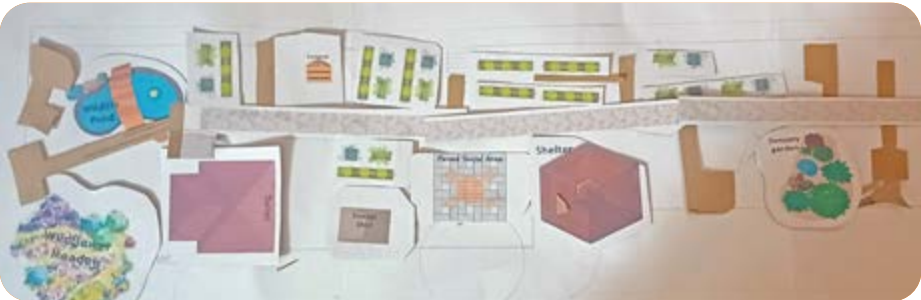


From mentoring to a thriving community garden

Our Power to Grow project supported Victoria College to design and fund a new community sensory garden at Bournville Moorings, built for students who are wheelchair users, with planting chosen for texture, scent and sound.



Above: Sow & Grow starter packs



Above: Bournville Moorings sensory garden.

This is exactly the kind of capacity-building we want to achieve, not just a session delivered, but a partner organisation left with the legacy of skills, confidence and funding know-how to sustain the work themselves.

The impact

A partner organisation that no longer needs us to write their next funding bid and residents who went from a single workshop to growing their own food at home.



Working with ecobirmingham has been an absolute game-changer for our setting and our green space at Bournville Moorings. The mentoring provided onsite staff training on bid writing, which was invaluable in kick-starting our funding applications. ecobirmingham didn't just suggest plants, they helped us create an inclusive, immersive environment that considers the needs of everyone. Beyond the physical green space, the staff training has empowered our team; we now have the confidence and practical skills to manage and develop the site sustainably, ensuring its long-term growth and success. We couldn't have asked for a more professional, knowledgeable, or supportive partner.

**Victoria College,
Power to Grow partner**



Stronger, connected communities

Sustainability sticks best when it's woven into things people already want to do together.

Our clothes swaps, upcycling workshops and family festivals gave thousands of people an easy, sociable way into environmental action; often without them realising that's what they'd signed up for.

- Family festivals for 400+ residents
- 72 sustainability pledges made

70%

were inspired to change their own lifestyle

64%

intended to share what they'd learnt with family & friends

100%

met someone new or made a friend

Our Growing Up Green festival in Sparkhill offered free entertainment and eco-workshops, benefiting more than 400 residents. In Allens Cross, Planet, Pizza & Play drew 165 people, including 73 children, despite the cold, wet March weather. 72 sustainability pledges were made on the day and 130 items swapped at the clothes stall alone.



Above: Listening to community priorities.



Above: Community clothes swap event.



Culturally rooted and genuinely popular

Working with The Springfield Project, our Re-stitch, Re-style, Re-useolution sessions, including upcycling saris into jackets, proved particularly popular, successfully inspiring participants to think differently about waste and creative reuse.



Above: Clothes repair workshop.

20% of participants told us our activities had helped them find work or a volunteering opportunity. Half of all participants said they now choose to buy products that are better for the environment; proof that community connection and environmental behaviour change reinforce each other.

We continued to develop our digital resources to help connect communities including our [69 wards](#) cycling and walking routes and our [sustainability toolkit](#) to help household plan and pledge their next steps.

The impact

Strangers who left as friends, a jacket that would have gone to landfill instead worn with pride, and a community that keeps choosing each other over convenience.



Thank you, I have learnt different things and I learnt how to make a Desi jacket.

**Participant, Re-stitch
Re-style Re-useolution**



Great clothes swap, lots of choice. Glad I came today. Very friendly staff too. Improving my mental health and sustainability.

Participant, Swap & Play

Flagship programme

Building Greener Communities

Year two of three years of deep, place-based partnership in Sparkhill and Allens Cross wards.





Building Greener Communities - Year 2

Building Greener Communities is our deepest, longest-term commitment.

A multi-year partnership with two anchor organisations, The Springfield Project in Sparkhill and Allens Cross Community Association, working to embed sustainable living and community resilience from the ground up.

In year 2, both partnerships deepened, and we developed Ward Directories and Ward-level Greener Community Plans; practical tools that help residents, partners and local changemakers understand and grow the green assets already in their neighbourhoods.

An Advisory Board, including Birmingham Voluntary Service Council (BVSC) and Birmingham City Council, has helped keep the programme connected to the wider voluntary sector and city policy throughout; guidance that shaped both delivery and the honest evaluation.

2,749

residents engaged

13,380

additional residents engaged through digital campaigns

44

residents trained in healthy eating and cooking

165

trained in writing personal sustainability plans

153

received energy advice

47

received bikeability training



Above: Ward Directory launch event.



Above: Healthy cooking session.

What changed for residents

Feedback from participants, even from an early-stage sample, points clearly in the right direction. 100% of those in cookery or gardening & growing sessions reported increased access to local, healthy produce and 65% said their health and wellbeing had improved.

100%

increased access to local, healthy produce

65%

reported improved health & wellbeing

46%

reported increased awareness of the value of nature

Two moments that capture it

Tota and Amy attended the air fryer course at The Springfield Project, Tota wanting to enjoy making new things, Amy having heard about it through the project's welcome space. Alongside the cooking, the course leader wove in environmental information about the energy efficiency of an air fryer versus an oven.



Above: Community allotment shared lunch.



I feel I'm enjoying it because I know new people and I know new recipes for healthy food. Now I hear more about the environment. We use less electricity with air fryer because it's less time.

Tota, Air Fryer Course participant



We have learnt lots about the environment and nature.

Attendee, Planet, Pizza & Play





What our independent evaluators found

We commissioned Know Research to independently assess progress and make recommendations. We're including their findings, both positive and challenging, because we believe that kind of transparency is what builds real trust and learning.

What we learned and changed

- Practical, needs-led activities like cookery courses, energy advice, family festivals consistently achieved the strongest engagement, especially where co-located with an existing need like energy advice alongside the St Bart's Community Pantry.
- Word of mouth, posters and face-to-face promotion reached local residents most effectively; online promotion sometimes attracted people from outside the target wards.
- Stand-alone sustainability workshops attracted limited engagement. So, we're now embedding that messaging into familiar, everyday activities instead like integrating One Planet Living® content into a Christmas Leftovers cooking session.
- Both anchor organisations told us they would benefit from clearer, earlier planning across the full delivery year. We are co-developing next year's delivery calendar earlier and continuing a locally-tailored mix of online and offline marketing.



Both anchor organisations are clearly very committed to Building Greener Communities and have felt very well supported and guided by ecobirmingham. There is a huge desire and commitment by everyone involved to make it work and to meet all of the targets.

**Know Research,
independent progress
report**

The impact

Two community anchor organisations who no longer see sustainability as ecobirmingham's project but as their own and with the confidence and tools to keep leading it.



Above: Community visioning event.



In their words

These four moments, in participants' own words, span four different starting points and the same outcome: a life changed in a small but lasting way.



My son was able to make new friends in an unfamiliar setting, which is something he usually struggles with.

Parent, Wild Holiday Bunch



I loved hearing about all that the garden has to offer and how to start growing my own food even from a flat. I'm looking forward to coming to other events and volunteering to get more involved.

Participant, Sow & Grow



I know who to send people to, and I will, for help with heating and bills.

Community partner, Energy Advice

Six different doors in

A warmer home, a first bike ride, a walk in the woods, a home-grown vegetable, a swapped jacket, a conversation with neighbours.

But one destination

People who feel healthier, more connected and confident, and better equipped to live sustainably. That is exactly what our theory of change sets out to achieve, and it is happening in Birmingham's most deprived wards first.



It's been an amazing opportunity. I have gained so much confidence, learned great skills and met people. If it wasn't for this class, I wouldn't have developed the courage to ride a bike.

Participant, Learn to Ride



Right: Outdoor creative learning.



Listening to communities

Increasing community power in decision making involves giving space for communities to be heard.

We don't choose new areas of work by guesswork. Before committing to our next two wards for the Building Greener Communities programme, we spent this year listening. It involved running community conversations, holding nature walks and forums, and meeting with local councillors, to understand and co-create with residents a vision for a greener future.

That intense listening to communities is what gives us confidence that our expansion into Sparkbrook & Balsall Heath East and Hall Green South wards will be as relevant and welcomed as the work we've already done in Sparkhill and Allens Cross.



Right: Community conversation event. Below: Community visioning boards. Illustrated by Anna Geyer.



Looking forward

Our new three-year strategy runs to March 2029, deepening our presence across Birmingham and embedding us more firmly within local communities.

By aligning with local and regional policy priorities and partners, we're well placed to co-create meaningful responses to the climate emergency, keeping our work relevant to the needs of the people we serve.

Key priorities for 2026/27

- Expanding our flagship *Building Greener Communities* programme into two new local areas, deepening our place-based model.
- Prioritising work with Birmingham's diverse communities, integrating sustainability priorities at ward level and strengthening relationships with councillors, changemakers and community leaders.
- Using our new One Planet Living® Recognised Leader status to deliver training directly to organisations and stakeholders across the city, helping them develop their own green pledges.



We hope you inherit a place that has chosen sustainability not as a slogan, but as a way of living.

From residents' 'Letter to Tomorrow', Hall Green South community engagement



Above: Making a Wormery.



Together we can make Birmingham greener, fairer and healthier



There are many ways to support our work: volunteering, becoming a friend or trustee, making a donation, leaving a legacy gift in your will, booking us for a training session, or joining us as a member of staff. Each helps us deliver important projects across the city as part of a passionate, committed team.

For businesses, we offer corporate packages including sustainability away-days and team workshops, and we're proud to partner with 1% for the Planet, so you can commit a percentage of your revenue directly to our work.

For individuals, committing to your own sustainability action plan or pledge, or supporting us through our digital platforms by sharing, commenting and getting involved with our campaigns on social media, are also great ways to help make the city greener.



Above: Exploring the natural world in detail.

Donate now 

£5/month

helps run a cycle tuition session

£10/month

helps run an outdoor education session

£25/month

helps deliver energy advice to reduce fuel poverty

[Find out more](#) about our work, how you can take part, and how to [donate via our website](#).

If you would like to talk about working together, [we'd love to hear from you](#).



Thank you to our funders and partners

Thank you to all our volunteers and staff, as well as the individuals, organisations and partners who have donated, contributed to and shared our work; especially major donors who have partnered with us in 2025/26.

- The Garfield Weston Foundation
- Central England Quakers
- John Swire 1989 Charitable Trust
- The Society of the Holy Child Jesus
- William A Cadbury Charitable Trust
- Cycling UK
- npower Business Solutions Foundation
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund
- Players of the People's Postcode Lottery
- The National Lottery Community Fund — Partnerships Midland Region
- NAVCA and the Cadent Foundation
- The Energy Redress Scheme
- The John Feeney Charitable Trust
- Birmingham City Council
- [Mikaela Lyons Jewellery](#)



Above: Led cycle ride.

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