



# IMPACT

2023/24

REPORT

[www.groundwork.org.uk/east](http://www.groundwork.org.uk/east)





2023/24

# GROUNDWORK EAST IMPACT REPORT

Taking practical action to create a fair and green future in which people, places, and nature thrive.

Groundwork East is a community and environmental charity working across the East of England to change places and lives.

As part of the national federation of Groundwork Trusts we have been championing action that benefits the natural world since 1985, running programmes to transform unloved green spaces, get people outside enjoying nature and supporting businesses to reduce their environmental impact.

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## Looking back on my first full year as Chief Executive I want to take a moment to reflect on the impact of our work, the challenges our communities have faced, and what lies ahead.

Our charity, with its long-standing commitment to environmental sustainability and community empowerment, has seen the people it works alongside navigate a relentless series of crises.

The rising costs of living affect more people in our communities than ever before, with those in vulnerable circumstances bearing the brunt.

This has deepened inequality, exacerbated mental health issues, and heightened the impacts of climate change across urban and rural communities.

Demand for our services has increased, and in response we have delivered projects, showcased throughout this report, that support people facing very real daily challenges around poverty, social isolation, mental well-being, and employment opportunities.

We are an environmental charity with people at our heart and we believe we all have a part to play in addressing the nature and climate crisis. This includes our organisation, and we are committed to reducing our own environmental impact – while being honest about the challenges this brings, especially

to the SME community. We also understand that the transition to net-zero must be fair and just and not leave anyone behind. Being part of a federation of charities brings a real strength to this work and helps advocate for change on a national scale.

My heartfelt thanks go to our staff, funders and partners, who are at the core of everything we do. Looking forwards, with plans and projects already well underway for the year ahead, we will continue to prioritise and champion partnership working to maximise ours and others' strengths. We know from years of experience that this always produces stronger results.

This report is a celebration of the people we've worked with and the impact we've made over the year.

I hope you enjoy reading about our work and invite you to join us in our mission to create a fair and green future in which people, places and nature thrive. If you'd like to find out more about Groundwork East, or believe we could support your community, please don't hesitate to reach out.

**Carolyn Reid**  
Chief Executive Officer



# A NOTE FROM PATRICK HUGHES

Chair of the Board of Trustees, Groundwork East



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**Here at Groundwork East we've increased our commitment to supporting people and communities across the East of England. As you read this report I hope you will see how we work to have a direct and lasting impact on people, places and the planet.**

We've supported 1900 people over the past year to make greener choices that benefit not only their own lives, but impact on the wider community. More than 3000 people have taken part in practical conservation activities and supported to grow their own fruit and vegetables and 340 people have been trained in climate education. Our programmes have identified significant carbon and cost savings and we've improved 80,000 square metres of land for people and nature.

We achieve our goals through our collaborations with partners and funders; and through the efforts of our outstanding staff.



We have worked hard to build support with local authorities and grant making organisations, who we work closely with to design and deliver real impact. These essential relationships draw on local knowledge and experience and I am excited about how we will continue to build on them in the year ahead. As Chair I am proud of the dedication and expertise shown every day by our team of staff, volunteers and trustees.

In the past year I have had the great pleasure of visiting projects, such as our Green Recovery programme, and I have seen first-hand the positive impact this has had on the individual participants, the environment and the wider local community. Being able to deliver such diverse impacts through one programme clearly illustrates the benefits of our approach.

From our Sustainable Business Services that have helped 384 local businesses reduce their environmental impact in 2023/24, to Home Grown, where green shoots in the back-garden lead to healthier and more environmentally sustainable diets for more than 2000 people, our mission is clear: to help build a fair and green future for the East of England in which people and nature thrive.

Next year sees the 40th anniversary of Groundwork East. We are excited about our plans for the future. We will continue to grow our services; helping some of the most vulnerable in our society live well and warm, supporting nature to thrive and continuing to work closely with the business community across the region, supporting the transition to Net Zero.



# EAST OF ENGLAND

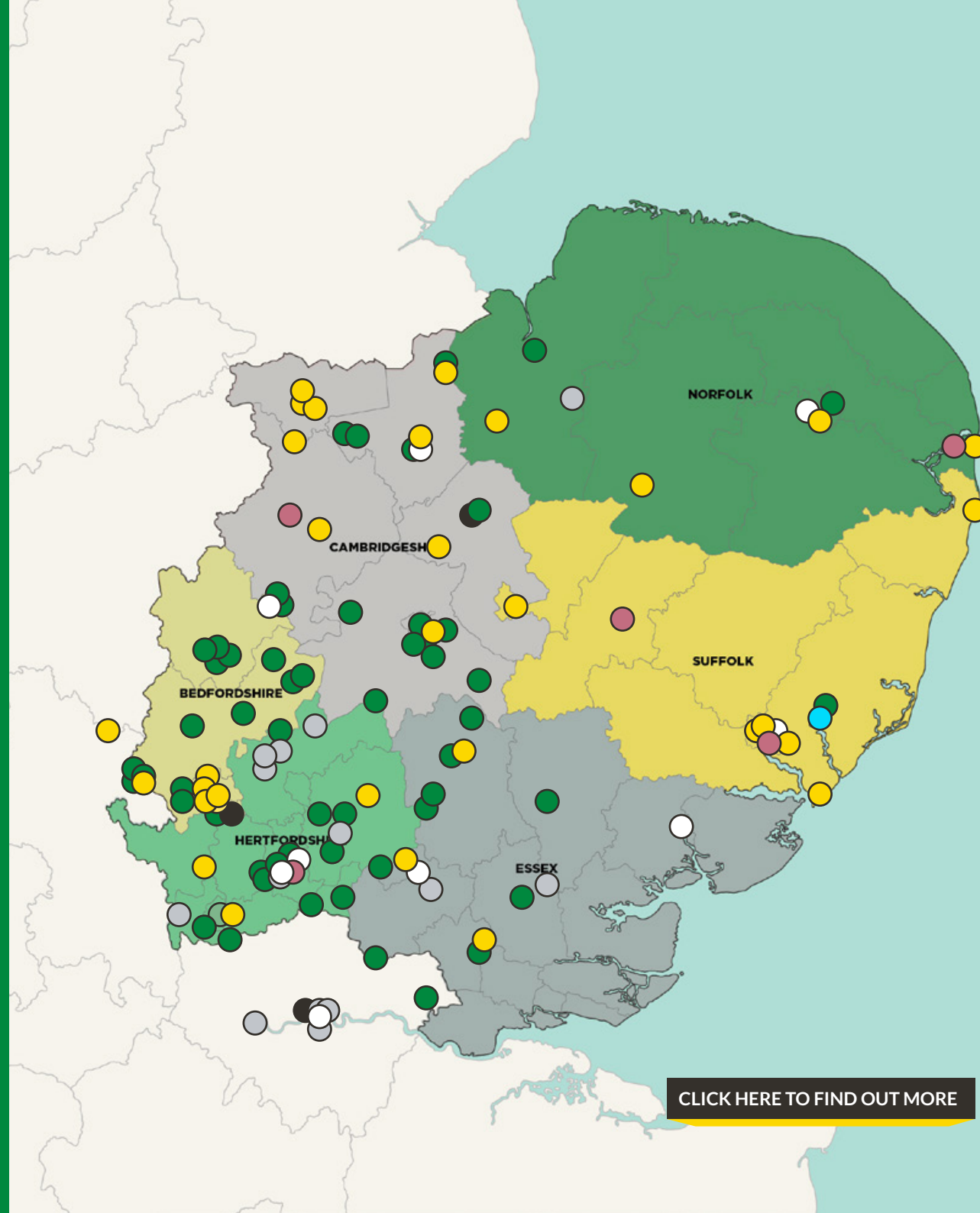
In the 2023/24 financial year Groundwork East ran programmes and projects stretching in scope from one-to-one mentoring with young people as they take their next steps in life, to supporting the restoration of a rare chalk stream river as it winds its way through one of the region's busiest towns.

We prioritise our work under three key themes of **PEOPLE**, **PLACE** and **PLANET** and measure our impact based on the difference we make to the lives of people, communities and local environments.

## KEY

Location and scale of our projects and programmes in 2023/24

- |            |                    |
|------------|--------------------|
| ● City     | ○ Region           |
| ● County   | ● Town             |
| ● Parish   | ● All other values |
| ● Postcode |                    |





# PEOPLE

**Groundwork East is proud to be the environmental charity with the green heart and people are at the centre of everything we do.**

In 2023/24 we supported 448 people into education, training or employment through programmes that build confidence as well as skills.

We also encouraged more than 1,900 people to make greener choices in their lives with targeted advice on recycling, pollution avoidance and carbon reduction.

While it's important we reach wide audiences, we know how impactful one-to-one support can be, and in 2023/24 we worked with 162 people on an individual level, spending time to help them build social, financial and emotional resilience.

**1900**  
**PEOPLE**  
**SUPPORTED**  
**TO MAKE**  
**GREENER**  
**CHOICES**



# UP

## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT



In 2023/24 UP was funded by Central Bedfordshire Council and delivered by Groundwork East, in partnership with Whipsnade Zoo.

**UP, which stands for 'Uplifting Potential' is a programme designed to help young people who are struggling in mainstream education take their next steps in life.**

Groups are deliberately small, and in 2023/24 we worked with 14 young people over two cohorts, referred to the programme by support workers and teachers. UP features practical, outdoor tasks carefully coupled with one-to-one and group sessions focused on emotional well-being, healthy eating and discussions on identifying and managing life's challenges.

Last year we partnered with Whipsnade Zoo near Luton to host UP activities where the young people were able to get involved in caring for the animals.

ACTIVITIES WERE  
**EXTREMELY**  
**FUN**

**ONCE IN A  
LIFETIME  
EXPERIENCE"**

**WHIPSNADÉ  
ZOO**  
a ZSL conservation zoo

Partnering with the zoo was a huge success, with all participants reporting a marked improvement in their emotional well-being and 100% of both cohorts returning to education or awarded places on further schemes and training – including one participant who was awarded a funded place on Whipsnade's zoo keeper scheme!

We're immensely proud of all UP participants, and are actively looking for new partners and settings to host the programme with us.



To find out more, contact,  
**Di Hedley – Operations Manager**  
at [east@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:east@groundwork.org.uk)







# GREEN DOCTOR

## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT



**Kathy\* contacted the Green Doctor in the middle of a cold snap. She told us she was living in her van in a rented parking space in Cambridge and had been unwell.**

We immediately sent her an electric blanket and a £50 Tesco voucher through the Charis Shop Winter Support Fund and once she was feeling better we introduced her to the team who work at the C3 Centre food bank.

Kathy was also introduced to the Citizens' Advice Bureau who attend the food bank every week, so in addition to food she received guidance and support on her next steps.

When we got back in touch with Kathy she told us she had been able to secure a job which provides accommodation and was very grateful to have seen our Green Doctor leaflet at her local community centre. \*Kathy is a pseudonym

To find out more, you can email **Green Doctor** service at [east@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:east@groundwork.org.uk)

Or go to our website at **Get Energy Help**



### Groundwork East Green Doctors provide help for vulnerable households who are struggling with their energy bills.

They are energy efficiency experts who visit people in their home to provide practical guidance on energy saving and referrals to other local support services, including debt advice and food banks.

In 2023/24 we provided Green Doctor services in Essex and Cambridge, supported by the Cadent Foundation, Energy Redress scheme and Cambridge Community Foundation. Over the course of the year Green Doctors visited 370 households, providing advice and signposting 851 people to support to alleviate poverty and help them feel warmer and safer in their homes.

**Green Doctor support has the dual impact of lowering bills and cutting emissions.**

**Estimated annual cost and carbon savings identified for households by Green Doctors in 2023/24 totalled just under £200,000 and 37 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e.**





## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Celtic Harmony is a well-loved site in Brickendon, Hertfordshire where people come to learn about ways of living in pre-historic times. In 2023/24 Groundwork East partnered with Celtic Harmony to run woodland workshops for people interested in outdoor volunteering.

The programme was part of the wider 'Lavina's Legacy' heritage lottery-funded programme which was developed in memory of a long-term volunteer.

Over four cohorts we worked with 31 people, providing transport to the site and supporting participants as they learned to carry out maintenance tasks such as planting, coppicing, willow weaving, path clearing and making bird and bat boxes. The aim of the programme was to get people outdoors and increase activity, while building a volunteer pool that would continue to support the site.

**IT WAS A  
GREAT  
EXPERIENCE  
IT GOT ME  
OUT & ABOUT  
AGAIN MIXING  
WITH LIKEMINDED  
PEOPLE**

To find out more about the Celtic Harmony project, you can go to their website [here](#).




Spending time outdoors in nature is good for our physical and mental well-being





# PLACE



Corby NHS Lakeside is a social prescription garden, meaning it has been designed to allow nature to support recovery and well-being. It was designed by Groundwork East landscape architects to be wheelchair accessible, with sensory planting, raised planters and inclusive seating options.


**The Groundwork movement was born in response to communities being left behind in times of hardship and recession.**

At our core is an unfaltering belief in the importance of community, particularly in how community spaces are cared for and used.

In 2023/24 Groundwork East improved more than 80,000 sqm of land, undertaking site design, community consultation and habitat creation alongside access enhancements such as new pathways and signage.

**The outdoors is for everybody: In 2023/24, 84% of the land we improved had public access**

In 2023/24 we worked across 166 sites, including parks, school grounds, skate parks, hospital grounds and even private gardens via our Green Aider garden restoration service for vulnerable residents in Hertfordshire.



To find out more about our landscape architecture services please get in touch at [east@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:east@groundwork.org.uk)

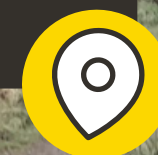




# Rediscovering THE RIVER COLNE

Being involved in this work has been really valuable to me. I've learnt a lot, met some amazing people and have had the privilege of being able to contribute to the wellbeing of this beautiful river.”

River Colne volunteer



## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

In conservation, scale is important, so making a difference to an entire town is a special feeling. In Watford, we have been working closely with Watford Borough Council to breathe new life into the River Colne as it winds its way through this urban landscape.

Our work in Watford is large-scale and long-term, and features multiple funders and partners as well as a dedicated team of volunteers. Conservationists are clear that to have the greatest impact, we need to think big and look for opportunity to join up habitats. This is exactly what we are doing in Watford, improving habitat both in-river and along its banks.

At Groundwork East, we know that people need to be involved at every step for a project of this ambition and scale to be successful,

and much of our work across Watford is centred on involving residents in the river restoration and providing opportunities to enjoy nearby green spaces.

With thanks to funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund we have been able to bring the river to those less able to enjoy riverside walks through our travelling 'Tales of the River' exhibition and get more families enjoying the outdoors together through riverside Wild Play.



To find out more, you can email **Sam Harbour – Operations Manager** at [east@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:east@groundwork.org.uk)

Or go to the website at **Rediscovering The River Colne**



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# Memorial Park LUTON

## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

**Healthy eating and spending time outdoors growing food benefits our physical and mental health and helps establish meaningful connections between where we live and the food we eat.**

Nestled in Memorial Park, Luton, is a hub of food growing activity where Groundwork East staff work with residents to care for a garden, growing fruit and vegetables and learning about healthy eating and cooking.

In 2023/24 we welcomed 477 people to Memorial Park. They came along to take part in gardening, cooking and wellbeing sessions, as well as WildPlay activities for families.

We also enjoyed working with SEN schools and corporate volunteering groups, and running garden and craft sessions in partnership with wellbeing services Chums and CAMHS.

Supported by Luton Borough Council and Luton Rising through the Community Investment Fund, plans are underway to make significant improvements to the garden. Already, the team have been establishing woodland floor planting schemes.



**Highlights at Memorial Park include creating herb beds and hanging baskets as well as boosting biodiversity with butterfly feeders and bug hotels.**

To find out more, you can email  
**Laura Ferrier - Programme Manager**  
at [east@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:east@groundwork.org.uk)

1 Blue spaces mean rivers, lakes and coastal outdoor spaces  
2 For more information go to [bbc.co.uk/news/scienceenvironment](https://bbc.co.uk/news/scienceenvironment)



HOME  
GROWNPROJECT  
SPOTLIGHT

# Food growing on A LARGER SCALE



Born during the pandemic, Home Grown is our online growing course which encourages families to try their hand growing food in gardens, pots and on windowsills.

In 2023/24 more than 2,000 people took part in Home Grown, all receiving a free growing pack featuring seeds, gloves and trowels. Participants received email newsletters throughout the growing season and in 2024 we extended the programme to care homes, with 600 residents getting involved.

The success of Home Grown demonstrates an appetite for grow your own and we're currently looking for new partners to support Home Grown in the future.

**FEELING PRETTY  
PROUD**  
OF MYSELF AS I'VE NEVER  
GROWN A SEED IN MY LIFE  
UNTIL NOW! I DIDN'T REALISE  
HOW GOOD ALL THIS GARDENING  
**WOULD BE FOR MY  
MENTAL HEALTH**

Home Grown participant



To find out more, you can email  
**Sarah Holloway-King – Home Grown Manager**  
at [east@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:east@groundwork.org.uk)



Or take a look at our Home Grown programme [here](#).



We worked with schools in Felixstowe in Suffolk to create a marine-themed sculpture trail at Langer Park



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# PLANET

**Our final strand of activity brings together the work we do with individuals and within communities under the theme of planet. Here, we are focused on raising awareness of the impact we can have on our environment as individuals, communities and businesses. At Groundwork East we have been supporting the business community to reduce their environmental impact since 2007.**

Through the various programmes that we have designed, developed and delivered we have supported over 3,693 organisations identifying potential cumulative savings of over £14.7mn and over 100,000 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e. We aim to ensure businesses are assisted to know their impact, given the knowledge to reduce it, incentivised to take a lead, and finally financially helped to make real progress. We are able to confirm that 24% of the savings have been realised by the organisations which is over £3.5mn and over 24,000 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e – a significant net positive contribution to the local environment.

In 2023/24 we provided 1,969 people with the information and tools to make greener choices in their lives, and our programmes advising

businesses and individuals on resource use identified potential annual carbon savings of 5,300 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e.

In 2023/24 we continued to provide targeted support to help local businesses reach net-zero, and our sustainability consultants provided impartial and independent advice to 384 businesses and organisations. This advice identified £205,000 of cost savings and over 373 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e entering the atmosphere<sup>3</sup>. As an environmental charity we are committed to reducing our own emissions and have led by example by introducing our own ambitious carbon reduction plan. This helps us understand first-hand the challenges faced by many of the businesses and organisations we work with.

<sup>3</sup> The average carbon footprint of an individual in the UK is 10 tonnes p/a



# GREEN RECOVERY

## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT



**Our Green Recovery programme illustrates clearly how our commitment to improving the environment can provide opportunity for people to build skills and progress into green jobs.**

In 2023/24, Green Recovery was funded by Huntingdonshire District Council and we worked with three small cohorts of adults who have struggled to find employment, equipping them with practical conservation and horticulture skills while improving local green spaces.

Green Recovery not only builds the skills and confidence of participants, it has the additional benefits of improving public spaces and boosting biodiversity. We can then use the improved sites for community activities, encouraging local residents to enjoy and help protect the newly improved green space.



To find out more, you can email **Jacob or Eve** at [east@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:east@groundwork.org.uk)



## TOM'S STORY

Tom took part in the Green Recovery programme at Paxton Pits in Cambridgeshire.



I was actively looking for what to do next in my life – I joined the project after attending a job fair and instantly being drawn to the energy of Eve and Jacob, the project leads.

I really enjoyed being part of a team where I got to speak to lots of interesting people. Working outdoors in all weathers was a challenge, however, the team spirit made it all worthwhile. I would thoroughly recommend this brilliant project; it made a huge difference to both my physical and mental health - you will feel better!

This project came at a perfect time for me, I am on the verge of pursuing a dream of self-employment and it helped me improve my practical skills. I have ended the project happier and more in control than when I began – the future looks and feels brighter. ”





# NET-ZERO ADVICE SERVICE FOR SUFFOLK BUSINESSES

## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT



SUSTAINABLE  
BUSINESS

**During 2023/24 Groundwork East's Net Zero Business Advisor Service supported enterprises within Suffolk to understand their greenhouse gas emissions and identify measures to reduce these.**

Several of the businesses we supported went on to receive grant funding to allow them to implement carbon reduction measures, including solar PV, electric forklifts and roof insulation.

This work was funded by a consortium of Suffolk's local authorities, accessing the UK government's Shared Prosperity Fund. Our sustainability consultants delivered free and impartial expert

advice to help 107 businesses and organisations save energy and reduce their emissions, establishing 86 tailored decarbonisation plans and identifying potential carbon savings of 5,137 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e.

**This support enabled us to see the difference that the solar PV would make to our business and understand if it was eligible for an East Suffolk Council grant. ”**

**Mike Hennessey**  
Earsham Street Café, Bungay







## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

**The Carbon Charter is an environmental accreditation scheme and sustainable business network delivered by Groundwork East across Suffolk and Norfolk alongside Suffolk County Council and the Environment Agency.**

The Charter provides a framework to support organisations to make on-going carbon reductions and recognises their progress over time.

In 2023/24 we supported 38 new businesses to gain their Carbon Charter award and supported a further 35 businesses to renew their awards and membership.

This brings membership to 122 organisations and represents savings of 444.6 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e. Amongst our new Silver award members is Eezybike, an electric bike rental firm.

The Ipswich-based SPILL Festival also received a Bronze award in recognition of their actions to reduce their own emissions, and those of their commitment to managing emissions and using environmental themes in their arts programmes.

**We integrate sustainability into our events wherever we can. Gaining the Carbon Charter will help us to continue to reduce our impacts and to share our experiences with others. ”**

Annie Harrison  
Producer  
at SPILL



## GEOPLACE LLP CARBON MANAGEMENT SUPPORT



**Our Sustainable Business Services team worked with GeoPlace, an organisation that manages and maintains the primary UK address and street data, to measure and manage their greenhouse gas emissions.**

In 2023 we retrospectively produced the organisation's baseline 2019 GHG Inventory (carbon footprint) and the recent year 2022, including Scope 1, Scope 2 and extending this to cover key Scope 3 emissions arising from their value chain. By comparing the baseline year with the recent year, we were able to verify that significant reductions had been achieved through the decommissioning of data centre servers and other potential carbon reduction actions through behaviour changes relating to commuting, business travel and accommodation. We are currently working on their latest GHG Inventory for 2023.

Our SBS team went on to deliver Carbon Literacy training to staff working within GeoPlace's Environment Group, helping them to identify opportunities to further reduce their climate impacts both within the organisation and at home.

Catherine Wright, Head of HR at GeoPlace, said:

**Groundwork helped clarify where our emissions are coming from and to understand what actions we can take to further reduce our carbon footprint. ”**

To find out more, you can email **Amy Coulter** at [east@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:east@groundwork.org.uk)





# ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

**SINGLE  
USE  
SUCKS**

**time after time**  
e-waste fund

With funding from Virgin Media's 'Time After Time' scheme we've been working with university students across the East of England to highlight the environmental impact of disposable vapes.

Research from Material Focus tells us five million disposable vapes are thrown away EVERY WEEK in the UK. Our work supports universities and students to recycle disposable vapes safely.



To find out more, see the [Material Focus website](#)



## HAVE YOU SEEN THE YELLOW FISH?

In 2023/24 Eddy the Yellow Fish was out and about in Ipswich with his 'Only Rain Down the Drain' message.

Eddy has been raising awareness that every piece of rubbish from single cigarette butts, to car wash chemicals ends up, untreated, in our rivers and seas if it's dropped directly into a surface water drain.

Groundwork East has been running the Yellow Fish campaign with the Environment Agency since 2017, reaching people across the region.



## CLIMATE CLUBS

In 2023/24 we continued to offer our Climate Club afterschool programme to primary schools across the region. In Essex, we ran clubs for more than 100 primary school students across 10 schools in and around Colchester.

Funded by Essex County Council's Climate Action Fund, the clubs run over six weeks in

school and each week focus on a new area of climate change, with a focus on solutions and community action.

We also offer climate change training to teachers through the CATCH (Climate Action Teacher Champions) programme and in 2023/24 supported teachers in Luton to create climate action plans for their schools.

## CARBON LITERACY TRAINING

In 2023/24 we accredited 340 people as carbon literate.



To find out more, [visit our website](#).



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# WORK WITH US

In 2023/24 we worked with 767 organisations, businesses and funders to improve places and lives across the region.

As a non-profit organisation we are independent and impartial and value relationships that have impact – whether that is with businesses, local authorities or other voluntary sector organisations.

Partnering with us can help you:

- > Address a local issue and connect with your local community and customers
- > Transform outdoor space, improving health and well-being, improve the environment and reduce resource use
- > Enhance your sustainability credentials and support your social value ambitions.

Find out more on our website  
[groundwork.org.uk/east](https://groundwork.org.uk/east)

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# OUR SERVICES

## PEOPLE

Youth work that improves the confidence and prospects of young people through nature connection.

Household support to help people struggling to heat their homes stay warm and address debt.

Support people of all ages to upskill and find work in the growing green jobs sector.

To find out more, **visit our website.**



## PLACE

Community consultation and engagement.

Activity and volunteering days (corporate and community).

Environmental projects for schools and groups.

Community food growing and healthy eating programmes for communities and schools.

Landscape design – play area and open space improvements; health, residential and school ground improvements, habitat and river corridor improvements; sustainable urban drainage systems.

## PLANET

Net-zero / carbon management consultancy services and grant support programmes.

Green space improvement – landscape architecture and biodiversity.

Environmental training, including accredited carbon and water literacy training.

Environmental accreditation schemes / business networks.

Environmental awareness-raising campaigns and programmes.





# THANK YOU!

Groundwork East is hugely grateful to the support it receives from volunteers, funders, partners and its trustees.

We look forward to the year ahead as we continue to reduce our own impact on the environment and advocate for social and environmental change alongside the communities we serve.

Our volunteers and green skills training participants contributed **£246,000** worth of time to outdoor conservation activity across the region and businesses **donated almost 600 hours** of staff time to support our projects.

THANK YOU!





**CHANGING PLACES**  
**CHANGING LIVES**



Registered charity number: **293141**  
Company registration: **1944186**  
Registered office: **Mill Green, Hatfield,**  
**Hertfordshire, AL9 5PE**

At Purdis Farm near Ipswich, Groundwork East landscape architects were commissioned by East Suffolk Council and worked closely with residents to refresh the play area and install green gym equipment. The work included the creation of a nature trail celebrating the site's heathland ecology, complete with a stargazing stone hare sculpture by Graeme Mitcheson.