



ERNEST COOK TRUST

learning from the land since 1952

SUMMARY OF TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2009

A full copy of the report and accounts is available from the Fairford Estate Office, or via the Charity Commission's website www.charity-commission.gov.uk

Objectives and Activities

The aim of the Ernest Cook Trust is to make educational grants and to carry out other educational work so as to be highly effective in pursuit of its charitable objective whilst, subject to that, maintaining its investments in its estates in ways that ensure their value, excellence and preservation.

Grants, which must always be for clearly educational purposes, aim principally to focus upon the needs of children and young people. The three main areas of activity currently supported are the wide spectrum of the arts, crafts and architecture, the environment and the countryside, and literacy and numeracy.

Full details of the Trust's grant-making work can be seen in the [Grants](http://www.ernestcooktrust.org.uk) section of our website www.ernestcooktrust.org.uk

The Ernest Cook Trust's estates are used as direct resources to provide opportunities for visits to farms, rivers, woodland and a number of other environments: such visits are made by schoolchildren of all ages and some adults.

On a wider scale the Trust continues to be involved with discussions and initiatives to explore ways in which sectional organisations can collaborate on farm visits and their work with schools, linking with the government's healthy eating initiative and the learning outside the classroom manifesto.

The Ernest Cook Trust is at the forefront of practical provision of outside education, offering children from a variety of backgrounds, in a variety of locations, the opportunity to experience what is increasingly considered by experts to be a highly important element of education and personal development.

Full details of the Trust's direct educational work can be found in the [Learning Outside the Classroom](http://www.ernestcooktrust.org.uk) section of our website www.ernestcooktrust.org.uk

Achievements and Performance

The Trust spent a total of £3,388,526 from an income of £3,420,931 in pursuit of its charitable objectives: this shows charitable expenditure of 99% of income.

The programme of work to maintain and improve the fabric of the estates has continued: major improvements have been made to four farms, three cottages and two workshops; a further twelve properties have been refurbished.

The consequences of these programmes are both aesthetic and financial improvements. Despite the prevailing adverse financial climate, and rents for agricultural holdings remaining static, the overall rent roll increased from £2,301,970 to £2,425,477.

During the year a net total of 461 educational grants, totalling £1,702,979, was made. Included within these grants was an exceptional award of £50,000 to the Royal Shakespeare Company to fund a learning and performance network. £1,280,480 was awarded under the large grants programme; £450,803 under the small grants programme. Areas of grant-making were as follows:

Arts Crafts and Architecture	£749,985
Environment and the Countryside	£567,924
Literacy and Numeracy	£231,839
Other	£153,231

Use of the estates as direct educational resources continued to increase and expand: there were 7,000 visits to the Gloucestershire estates during the year and 2,000 children visited the Trent estate in Dorset.

The visits include weekly, monthly or termly repeat visits as part of the Forest School initiative, residential visits during the summer term, after school visits as part of the 'extended schools' programme and numerous visits linked to the National Curriculum.

Following a report in May 2008 containing an analysis of the efficacy and cost effectiveness of educational visits to the estates, the Trustees approved the extension of educational use of their land to all the main estates. During the year an education officer has therefore been appointed, as planned, to work on the Little Dalby estate in Leicestershire, to which visits are now being made.

Following consideration by the Trustees of the object of the Trust, and discussion with the Charity Commission and others after the passing of the Charities Act 2006, a comprehensive review of the strategy for the future operation and management of the Trust was adopted in July 2008: this takes account of the Trustees' powers under the terms of the Trust Deed, and aims both to raise the profile of the Trust and its work, and to increase the size of the Trust. In accordance with the strategy, a five-year plan has been prepared and adopted. The aim of the Trust, set out in the strategy, is stated at the beginning of this summary.

In further pursuit of the strategy, a public relations consultant has been appointed to help improve and raise the profile of the Trust. A new logo and letterhead have been adopted and work has continued on redesigning the website and producing a series of leaflets explaining the work of the Trust.

Financial Review

The fund balance carried forward at the 31st March 2009 is £75,819,155, compared with £82,239,147 in 2008. The substantial reduction arises from realised and unrealised losses on investments.

Nonetheless grant-making increased to £1.73m in the year in order to reduce the level of reserves. However, the current recession, and the associated effect on the value of the Trust's investments, has had the immediate consequence of reducing reserves. Planned expenditure on grants has therefore been reduced to £1.3m for the next year: this regrettable, but necessary and prudent, step will be reviewed when values increase.

Public Benefit

Following the passing of the Charities Act 2006, there must be an identifiable benefit or benefits arising from the work of all charities, and such benefits must be to the public or a section of the public.

In pursuit of its educational charitable object, the Trust gives away a substantial sum every year in educational grants and, in addition, uses its estates as direct educational resources, hosting an increasing number of visits by school children and other parties.

Although grants are made only to registered charities, not-for-profit organisations or community interest companies, no section of the public is excluded from the grant-making work of the Trust, which is open to applicants from anywhere within the United Kingdom. Educational visits are in practice only made by groups within reasonable travelling distance of the Trust's estates, but the number of estates involved in this work is growing. No fees are charged in connection with any of the Trust's work.

It can therefore be seen that the work of the Trust benefits the public: further details of the educational work are set out on our website.