



**Draft
Social
Accounts**

**January 2009 –
December 2010**

**Banff and Macduff Community Trust Ltd
Banff Castle, Castle Street, Banff AB45 1DL
Company Registration No. 354221**

**Tel: 01261 815185
Email: info@bmct.co.uk**

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Section 1 – The Background

1.1 Introduction

Why Social Auditing?

Banff and Macduff Community Trust has been encouraged to instigate its first Social Auditing exercise by Aberdeenshire Council as part of its service level agreement with the local authority.

However, BMCT is an organisation that recognises the value and importance of measuring performance to confirm whether or not it is meeting the needs and aspirations of the community it was set up to serve.

Social Auditing will allow BMCT, at an early stage in its existence, to ensure that it is meeting its social and economic objectives and highlight areas of its service delivery that need to change, improve, or be completely overhauled.

With core funding from the local authority expected to cease in March 2011, BMCT also hopes that its first set of social accounts will provide evidence to potential funders of the impact and success of the Trust and its commitment to continual improvement.

BMCT sees Social Audit as a valuable tool that is essential to the future growth and development of the Trust, and will use this experience as a springboard to future audits.

Who was involved?

The operations and development manager has been the key person responsible for carrying out the social audit process. Regular feedback and discussion has taken place with members of the Board of Directors, with assistance being provided as and when required. Directors Milan Copic and Nicholas Dolphin were involved in identifying the Trust's mission, objectives and activities.

In addition, the Trust would like to sincerely thank Kevin McDermott of Aberdeenshire Council for steering and mentoring the Trust through its first Social Audit, and for handling the employee questionnaire responses in order to assure staff that the process was confidential and objective.

Finally, the Trust would like to express its deepest gratitude to all individuals, groups and service providers who so willingly participated in the consultation.

1.2 Background

History

Banff and Macduff Community Trust is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee following development trust principles. BMCT was set up as a successor to the Aberdeenshire Towns Partnership – a formal agreement between Aberdeenshire

Council, Scottish Enterprise Grampian and the then Community Scotland. The agreement was signed in March 1998 and recognised that the towns of Aberdeenshire are the commercial and social centers of the region and play a critical role in the area's well-being. Locally, the work of the ATP was carried out through a community organisation or steering group in each town, which was a representative body consisting of various groups and interests, including elected members of Aberdeenshire Council. At the conclusion of the ATP, it was recognised that communities themselves had a role to play in stimulating the social and economic development of their towns. The ATP Next Steps programme was launched, and BMCT was set up in tandem with three other development trusts serving the towns of Fraserburgh, Huntly and Peterhead. Although each trust is a separate entity serving its own community, each shares the vision of improving the social and economic fabric of its local area.

BMCT was launched in January 2009, with its inaugural business plan being approved by Aberdeenshire Council later that year. It continues to have a regular contact with the local authority through the ATP co-ordinator, is a member of the Banff and Buchan Local Community Planning Group and encourages the active involvement of elected members.

In common with the three other Trusts, BMCT has a service level agreement with Aberdeenshire Council. This secures funding for core and development costs until March 2011, with other external funders providing grant assistance for specific projects where appropriate. In March 2011, BMCT and the three other development trusts were able to secure funding for a further 12 months, until March 2012.

In order to prepare for the cessation of core funding and to become less reliant on the vagaries of grant aid, BMCT has committed much time and effort to identifying and developing revenue streams to allow the Trust to become self-sustaining. This audit covers the period from January 2009 to December 2010.

Structure

Banff and Macduff Community Trust is a Company Limited by Guarantee and not having a share capital, registered under the Companies Act 1985. It is a not-for-profit company which is owned by the membership, of which there are currently 230. Those who serve on the Board of Directors are elected from the membership or from the community because of their special skills or attributes. Many of the Directors have links to other community organisations, such as youth groups, community council, community safety group, and business association. There are currently nine volunteers on the Board of Directors. From within the main board, four directors serve on the board of BMCT Green Tree Ltd – a separate trading company which was set up to oversee the operation of The Green Tree coffee house and restaurant. BMCT is not a charity, but it is a long-term aim of the organisation to work towards either charitable status or becoming a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

BMCT has one full-time member of staff – an operations and development manager. BMCT Green Tree Ltd employs a full-time chef manager. Staff levels at The Green

Tree have varied since its opening in August 2010, but in January 2011 there were six full-time employees and five part-time employees. The corporate structure is outlined on the following page at **Figure 1.1: Corporate Structure**

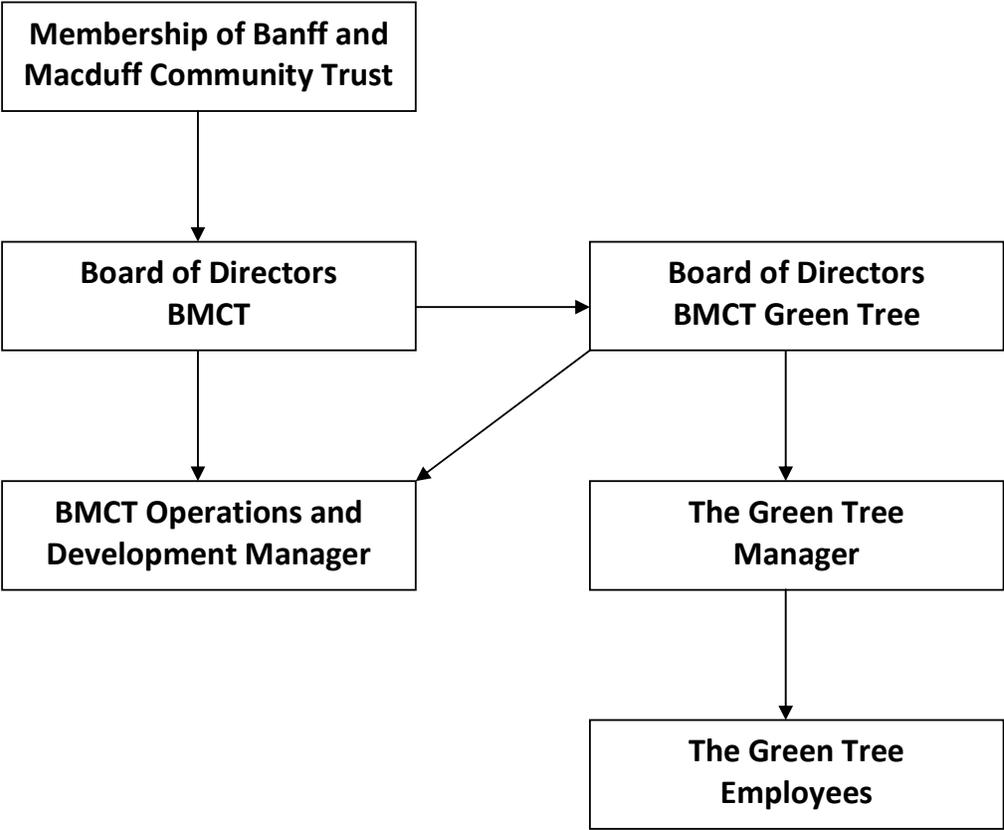


Figure 1.1: Corporate Structure

Working Area

BMCT’s office is based at Banff Castle, but has a geographic remit to work in the towns of Banff and Macduff. Together, the towns have a combined population of 7,760. The towns are shown on the map below.



Figure 1.2 Map of Aberdeenshire/Banff and Macduff

1.3 Mission, Values, Objectives and Activities

Prior to embarking on the social accounting process, BMCT had ideas about its mission and objectives but nothing was written down on paper. It was apparent that this required to be done, not just to aid with the social accounts, but to give stakeholders and the public could have a reference point. Leanne Carter worked in partnership with Milan Copic and Nicholas Dolphin in setting out the mission, values, objectives and activities. A meeting was held with Kevin McDermott in August, 2010 at which this document was streamlined. Due to time constraints, a formal Board meeting was not held to adopt the mission, values, objectives and activities, but discussions were held via email and an agreement was reached in late August 2010.

Mission

BMCT's mission statement is:

“To build a sense of community and pride of place which fosters the wellbeing of those who live in, work in and visit Banff and Macduff.”

Values

BMCT believes in a number of core values which it applies to all areas of its work in the towns of Banff and Macduff. These are:

Inclusive: BMCT will bring people together to meet shared objectives, to build and utilise the strengths and skills of the community, and give people a say in the future of their towns.

Proactive: BMCT will be a vehicle to make things happen, secure resources and ensure they are applied appropriately to meet community aspirations.

Partnership: BMCT will play a co-ordinating role in bringing together other agencies, groups and interests to work in partnership for the good of the community.

Welcoming: BMCT will seek to welcome all members of the community, from young to old, from residents to visitors, in all of its activities.

Dynamic: BMCT will seek innovative solutions to alleviate social, economic and environmental problems.

Objectives

The work undertaken by BMCT currently falls into four objectives, and each are supported by a range of activities. These are as follows:

1. To make Banff and Macduff better places to live, work and visit by

- Running a community café and hub, The Green Tree
- Developing a community wind turbine to generate an income for the community
- Improving the appearance of the towns through In Bloom and the Shop Art and Living Spaces schemes
- Creating training opportunities for young, unemployed and socially excluded

2. To give more people and community groups a say in the development of their towns by

- Holding open meetings to allow the public to learn about the Trust and to get involved in the work of the Trust
- Providing information on community development and the work of the Trust through our website, newsletters and the local press.
- Encouraging members of the public to come forward with ideas for projects and encourage them to follow through to inception
- Working in partnership with other local organisations and bodies with similar objectives

3. To build and utilise the strengths and skills of the community by

- Creating employment and training opportunities at The Green Tree
- Volunteering opportunities through In Bloom, Living Spaces and contributing to the general running of the Trust
- Opportunity to become involved in the Trust at all levels, from membership through to active director

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4. To effectively manage the Trust and its people by

- Developing an income stream through The Green Tree
- Investigating how income streams, including grants, can be derived from activities and proposed activities
- Offering reasonable terms and conditions to those employed by the Trust
- Providing training and personal development opportunities for staff and volunteers

Activities

BMCT has a very broad mission statement, and to that end is involved in a wide range of projects and initiatives to achieve the goal of making the towns better places to live, work and visit. BMCT is still a very young organisation: much of its first 12 months of existence involved exploring its purpose and working with the local community to identify areas of need. Despite only coming into being in January

2009, it has already found itself having to adapt and adjust. Due to external forces, many of the proposed activities in its original business plan have not been achieved. The result of this has been that BMCT has had to react to new opportunities as and when they arise. Some of the activities carried out by BMCT include but are not limited to:

- Photography Project in which community groups were asked to photograph things they liked and disliked about their communities. The prevalence of run-down and boarded up buildings was by far the biggest bug bear, and was the catalyst for BMCT's Shop Art Project to install a mural on an empty shop front in Macduff. It is hoped the exercise will be repeated in 2011 in Banff.
- Bid to convert the former Trinity & Alvah Church into an arts and performance venue. This failed after Aberdeenshire Council offered the lease to another organisation.
- Proposals to take on management of public toilets in Banff and Macduff. The business plan was rejected by Aberdeenshire Council in February 2010. However, dialogue on the plans has recently reopened as part of the local authority's budget considerations for 2011/12.
- The creation of a community shop and office space in Strait Path. This project was not progressed after failed to attract funding from the Scottish Government's Town Centre Regeneration Fund.
- Conversion of the Bayview Hotel in Macduff for a training hotel and restaurant. A bid to the Scottish Government's Town Centre Regeneration Fund to purchase and convert the building was not successful, but public support was such that BMCT continued to progress the project. A full feasibility study on the proposal was about to commence when the hotel was sold to a third party.
- Launch of The Green Tree coffee house and restaurant, which currently supports 11 full and part-time posts. As well as creating employment, The Green Tree actively supports local suppliers wherever possible and has addressed the concerns of the community by bringing new life to a run-down building.
- Creation of the In Bloom group. Volunteers have tackled landscaped areas in the town and erected, watered and maintained over 120 hanging baskets during the summer months.
- Investigation of the potential for renewable energy. BMCT is currently involved in a feasibility study of potential sites for a single turbine wind generation scheme.

Many projects in the early days of BMCT did not progress, largely for reasons outwith its control. However, these stumbling blocks have been viewed in a positive manner as they have contributed to the learning experience of a fledgling organisation. For example, in re-opening discussions with Aberdeenshire Council regarding the management of public toilets in Banff and Macduff, BMCT has been able to use the experience and knowledge gained on the first occasion to strengthen its ability to negotiate on this complex issue.

Section 2 - Scope of the Social Accounts

2.1 Scope

As has been stated previously, BMCT is a relatively young organisation and the scope of the social accounts has been influenced by its lifespan: it is only within the past 12 months that BMCT was able to push forward and start delivering visible projects and results on the ground. The scope of the social accounts were determined by four main elements.

1. It was decided to focus the thrust of the accounts on two flagship projects – The Green Tree and In Bloom. It was felt that focusing on these two activities would also give an opportunity to examine the effectiveness of BMCT’s work: were the principles behind these projects supported by stakeholders, and did they see it as being of benefit to the community? It was the view of BMCT that stakeholder assessment would also inform future projects and activities of BMCT in a meaningful way.

2. In addition, the accounts also focussed on stakeholders’ perceptions of the work of BMCT, the value to the community both now and in the future, and their relationship with the organisation. Their perception of how BMCT lives its values was also included in the scope of the accounts.

3. BMCT, along with the three other development trusts in the ATP Next Steps Programme, were encouraged to carry out this social audit as part of its service level agreement with Aberdeenshire Council. In order that officers and elected members could assess the effectiveness of the development trusts at the conclusion of the current financial support package, a report is to be made on the results of the social accounts to the council in March. Due to the timescale, limits on staff resources and competing workload priorities, it was agreed to concentrate time and effort in consulting key stakeholder groups as opposed to all stakeholders. A stakeholder analysis is displayed at **Figure 2:1**.

4. That position changed when it became apparent that elected members were seeking consultation with other local groups and their assessment of the impact of BMCT. Due to lack of staff time, a proposed focus group event for members had to be dropped in favour of a questionnaire for local groups. BMCT recognises that the process of consultation would be greatly enhanced if questionnaires could be accompanied with focus groups and one-to-one interviews, and would wish to see these other methods used in future social accounts. The number of local groups in the Banff and Macduff area is vast, and it was felt that to try and identify all of them would utilise too much time and resources. BMCT had identified a number of external groups and partners as part of the stakeholder analysis, and it was agreed that consultation should take place with groups that BMCT had the most contact with since its inception. This decision recognised that these are the most likely groups that BMCT will interact and work with in future, and that BMCT had most to gain by gathering their responses. Many of these were identified as partners of the Banff and Buchan Community Planning Group.

2.2 Methodology

The methodology for this Social Audit has been influenced by the fact that this is the first set of Social Accounts produced by BMCT, the timescale involved and the restriction of staff resources. It was felt that this should be a “dipping the toe in the water exercise” – the consultation had to be expansive enough so that it was meaningful, but not so extensive that the whole process became unmanageable and all consuming.

It was decided to use questionnaires as the basis for all consultation with key stakeholder groups. Initially it was envisaged that this would be supplemented with a focus group for members, which was to take the form of a quiz night to test their knowledge on the Trust and to stimulate debate. However, this idea had to be dropped from the process due to pressure on time and resources with the inclusion of local groups in the stakeholder consultation.

This has meant that this set of social accounts is based entirely on questionnaires. Separate questionnaires for each of the stakeholder groups were devised. Although largely following the same format, each questionnaire included questions relevant to the stakeholder group.

The main questionnaire for members was sent via an email link, while those members with no email address received the same questionnaire on a paper format. All members received a second copy of the most recent BMCT newsletter in order to refresh their minds about the work and activities of the Trust. The survey was also loaded onto the BMCT website so that non-members had an opportunity to feed in their views. A combination of email and paper questionnaires was used for all other stakeholder groups.

It was also decided to treat Green Tree customers as a stakeholder group as their opinions on the impact of the café was key. Having made the choice to be a customer, it would be interesting to note their motivation. It was decided that they would receive exactly the same general questionnaire as members and non-members to gather as much data as possible. In order to help them make informed responses, Green Tree customers received a paper copy of the most recent Trust newsletter.

Directors were also asked specific questions about performance against BMCT activities. Questions about activities were only asked of directors simply because they were perceived to be the only stakeholder group with enough knowledge about BMCT to answer these more detailed points.

During the period of the social accounts, a small pool of volunteers were involved in delivering the In Bloom gardening project. These numbered five in total, but the volunteer pool has since grown. Volunteers were seen as a key stakeholder group because they are integral to BMCT and play a role in delivering BMCT services. In

addition to answering general questions, they were asked specific questions about their volunteering role.

The returns from the questionnaire, in particular the web-based questionnaire picked up by non-members, has proved slightly problematic. Respondents were not required to answer every question, and therefore the number of responses for each question varies widely.

Staff questionnaires were confidential. All of the responses were sent directly to and analysed by Kevin McDermott of Aberdeenshire Council. This was to ensure the results remained impartial, but also to encourage staff to express their views in the knowledge that their responses were entirely confidential.

Other information in the social accounts, such as the expenditure of BMCT and The Green Tree in the local area, staff training opportunities, and volunteer man hours, were gathered from data already held by BMCT. Information about where customers of The Green Tree come from was analysed by customer comment cards handed in to the café. No other data from the customer comment cards appears in this set of social accounts. The questions on the cards relate to levels of service, quality of food, and standards of cleanliness on the premises and were therefore not deemed relevant to the scope of the social accounts.

The local groups consulted were organisations that BMCT felt it had a relationship with. Of the 36 local groups consulted, 26 were partners in the Banff and Buchan Local Community Planning Group of which BMCT is a member. A full list of the groups consulted with can be found at Appendix 7. It was felt that consulting with these organisations would enable BMCT to gauge the impact it was making, and the survey would identify relationships that required to be improved or opportunities for further closer working. A flaw in using only questionnaires in which to consult again became apparent with local groups: how could BMCT be sure the views expressed in the questionnaire were the views of the group rather than the views of the person completing it on behalf of the group?

A selection of additional comments from the questionnaires appear in various sections of the social accounts. These were selected at random and aim to show an equal balance, as far as possible, of positive and negative feedback. All of the additional comments appear at Appendix 1.

2.3 Stakeholder Sample

Figure 2:1 sets out the stakeholders consulted, the response rate for each stakeholder group, and a summary of the topics they were asked about. It should be noted that it has not been possible to put a rate against the response from non-members as targeting of this group was through the website with a limitless number of respondents.

The stakeholder groups that were not consulted as part of the Social Accounting were former directors, funders, a number of external groups and partners, community representatives (councillors, MSPs, MP), suppliers and media.

The questionnaire distributed to the membership included options for respondents to tick boxes indicating whether they were members, non-members, directors and volunteers. This was to take account of the fact that a director or a volunteer may have different views on the questions when answering in different capacities.

Stakeholder Group	Topics consulted on	Sent Out	Returned	%
Members	Values; Impact of BMCT; The Green Tree; In Bloom	230	62	26
Non-members	Values; Impact of BMCT; The Green Tree; In Bloom	N/A	91	N/A
Directors	Values; Objectives and Activities; Impact of BMCT Volunteering; The Green Tree; In Bloom	8	7	87.5
Staff	Values; Impact of BMCT; Employment with BMCT; The Green Tree	12	8	66
In Bloom Volunteers	Values; Impact of BMCT; In Bloom; Volunteering with BMCT	5	4	80
Green Tree Customers	Values; Impact of BMCT; The Green Tree; In Bloom	25	8	32
Local Groups (including LCPG partners)	Values; Impact of BMCT; Extent of relationship with BMCT; Benefits of relationship; BMCT's contribution to LCPG	36	15	41
Jobcentre Plus	Impact of The Green Tree in relation to local employment	3	3	100

Figure 2:1: Stakeholder Consultation Sample, Topics and Returns

Section 3 – Stakeholder Feedback

3.1 Values and Impact

All stakeholder groups were asked to indicate how far they felt BMCT lives up to its values, and were also asked to give their views on the impact BMCT has made on the community since its inception. Both internal and external stakeholders were asked to comment on these two areas, as it was extremely important to determine if the public perception of BMCT differed from that of those most closely connected to the organisation.

Footnote on stakeholder feedback: *It should be highlighting at this stage that there is a fairly consistent number of “strongly disagree” answers in response to all of the consultation questions. The three which appear consistently were returned from the web-based survey: two of the three have ticked strongly disagree to all questions, the other ticked strongly disagree to most questions but did not complete the survey beyond questions on The Green Tree. Two of these surveys emanated from the same IP address. Two of the three also contained comments relating to redundancies at The Green Tree.*

Values

Respondents were asked to tick a box on a scale of ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’ to reflect their opinion of how BMCT lives up to its values. The responses were as follows:

The Trust is an inclusive organisation, as it brings people together to meet shared objectives, to build and utilise the strengths and skills of the community, and gives people a say in the future of their towns

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
Members	16	28	8	3	1
Non-members	3	20	15	1	3
Directors	6	1			
Staff	5	3			
Volunteers	2	2			
GT customers	2	6			
Local Groups	6	8		1	

The Trust is a proactive organisation, as it is a vehicle to make things happen, secure resources and ensure they are applied appropriately to meet community aspirations

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
Members	19	31	5	1	
Non-members	4	20	14	1	3
Directors	5	2			
Staff	5	3			
Volunteers	2	2			
GT customers	1	6	1		
Local Groups	7	7	1		

The Trust believes in partnership working, as it plays a co-ordinating role in bringing together other agencies, groups and interests to work for the good of the community

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
Members	15	27	11	2	
Non-members	3	21	13	1	3
Directors	5	2			
Staff	6	2			
Volunteers	2	1		1	
GT customers	2	6			
Local Groups	7	5	2	1	

The Trust is a welcoming organisation as it welcomes all members of the community from young to old, from residents to visitors, in all of its activities

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
Members	16	32	6	2	
Non-members	21	49	19	3	3
Directors	5	2			
Staff	7	1			
Volunteers	2	2			
GT customers	4	4			
Local Groups	6	3	6		

The Trust is a dynamic organisation, as it seeks innovative solutions to alleviate social, economic and environmental problems

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
Members	15	28	10	2	
Non-members	18	47	24	3	3
Directors	5		1		
Staff	6	2			
Volunteers	2	1	1		
GT customers	4	4			
Local Groups	6	3	6		

Additional comments (full list can be viewed at Appendix 1.1)

- All of these statements may be true, but I am not aware of the evidence, or actual results of this.
- They are good 'ideals' but how far they have actually been realised I'm not sure. I'm not sure that there is a wide range of local people involved, though I really don't know.
- The trust has been very proactive at improving the Banff and Macduff area and provide opportunities for all.

Commentary

The overall views of stakeholders are that BMCT is living up to its values. It would appear that members are more positive about the values of BMCT than non-members, however there was a wide range of responses across the board, barring strongly disagree, from members. In general terms, perception on how BMCT lives its values is more positive from within the organisation than outside it. It is likely that the results are linked to knowledge about BMCT. Members are more likely to be aware of how BMCT lives its values, but directors are likely to have even more positive views as they are at the heart of the organisation. It shows that more needs to be done to effectively communicate with stakeholders.

Impact

Respondents were asked to tick a box on a scale of 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' to reflect their opinion of the impact of BMCT. Directors were asked only three of the questions, as they were asked much more focussed questions about objectives and activities of BMCT. Their answers are examined later in the report. The statements were drawn up by Leanne Carter with the assistance of Kevin McDermott. They were phrased in order to gain an understanding on the perceived impact of BMCT within the community and to assess whether the community would envisage using BMCT as a vehicle to help make things happen. All of the statements are important in helping to assess the impact, but statements 3, 4 and 5 are particularly so because of their explicit nature. The responses were as follows:

The Trust gives people a say in the development of Banff and Macduff

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
Members	17	26	13	0	1
Non-members	4	20	14	0	4
Staff	5	1	2		
Volunteers	2	2			
GT customers	2	4	2		
Local Groups	6	8		1	

Members of the community are encouraged to come forward with their ideas for projects for the Trust to take on

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
Members	16	32	4	5	
Non-members	4	18	14	1	4
Staff	4	4			
Volunteers	2	2			
GT customers	2	4	2		
Local Groups	6	6	3		

The Trust has had a positive impact on the towns of Banff and Macduff

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
Members	17	33	5	1	
Non-members	9	20	10	1	3
Directors	5	2			
Staff	6	1	1		
Volunteers	2	2			
GT customers	2	4	2		
Local Groups	9	5		1	

I feel that good things have happened in Banff and Macduff that would not have happened had it not been for the work of the Trust

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
Members	20	30	7		
Non-members	7	18	14	1	3
Directors	6	1			
Staff	4	4			
Volunteers	1	3			
GT customers	4	3	1		
Local Groups	8	5	2		

I feel that good things will happen in future in Banff and Macduff because of the work of the Trust

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
Members	22	27	7		
Non-members	6	20	13	1	3
Directors	7				
Staff	7	1			
Volunteers	1	3			
GT customers	2	4	2		
Local Groups	6	5	3		

If I had an idea to help improve Banff and Macduff, I would approach the Trust to share it

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
Members	20	29	5	2	1
Non-members	4	24	10	1	3
Staff	7	1			
Volunteers	2	2			
GT customers	3	2	3		
Local Groups	9	5		1	

Additional comments (full list can be viewed at Appendix 1.2):

- I don't know how to get involved. Signed up but not much information is forthcoming. But I do think it's definitely a good thing.
- The Trust have made a very positive start to improve the environment we live in and will hopefully go from strength to strength.
- A lot of time and money has been squandered going for big projects which were not researched and thought out properly. There is little big picture co-ordination with the agencies within Banff and this type of co-ordination could've made quite an impact on our economy and sense of community. The most successful project has been the In Bloom. I would question whether we have had value for money.
- The community trust has been a good thing for Banff and Macduff because it's about the community doing things for themselves rather than relying on other people to do it for them. People can say what they want for the town rather than the council telling them what they can have. Long may the community trust continue!

Commentary

Stakeholders largely feel that BMCT has made a positive impact on the community since its inception, and that it is an organisation they feel is working for the community in a positive way. It is pleasing that the majority answered "strongly agree" or "agree" to key questions on the impact of BMCT: they feel that BMCT has

brought about positive change to the community and believe the organisation will continue to do so in the future. BMCT believes it is important that the organisation holds onto these values and continues to operate in such a way that it meets community expectations.

However, it is clear that views from within the organisation differ from the views outwith BMCT. The number of non-members responding “neither agree or disagree”, “disagree” or “strongly disagree” – the vast majority of which have emanated from the web survey - would perhaps suggest that non-members are not so aware of the activities and impact of BMCT. It is clear that BMCT needs to do more focussed work with this stakeholder group to understand why they feel the organisation is failing to make an impact, and what they feel needs to be done to effect change.

In the additional comments, some respondents commented that they did not know enough about BMCT to answer the questions, or did not know enough about the organisation in general. While this is to be expected from non-members, it was concerning that some members were of this view.

Strategic Action Points for BMCT

- Improve communication with stakeholders by continuing with the quarterly members’ newsletter and continuing to make it available in both electronic and paper format. The paper version should be circulated more widely to community venues – The Green Tree, community centres, libraries, doctor surgeries, etc - in order to reach more non-members. Any important news between newsletters should also be relayed.
- BMCT will do more to encourage participation and attendance at open board meetings, and look at the format to make the events more appealing. *Footnote: this has already been actioned, with the January meeting taking the form of a Burns Night celebration at The Green Tree, supplemented by presentations on BMCT’s work, an appeal for feedback on future projects and recruitment drive for more volunteers, explaining how people can get involved at all levels. This approach resulted in the best ever attendance at a public board meeting, and will be a formula used in future.*
- Increase the profile of directors as an authority on local issues, making media outlets aware they are available to comment on issues of community importance.

3.2 Objectives and Activities

Members, non-members, Green Tree customers and Directors were asked to comment on the objectives and activities of BMCT by giving their impression of the two flagship projects – The Green Tree and In Bloom. Staff were also asked their opinions but only on The Green Tree, and the number of questions was reduced in order to make them more relevant. For example, it would be clear that staff of The Green Tree would spend more time in the town centre since the café opened, because that is their place of work. They were not asked about In Bloom in order to focus their views on employment and the café. Similarly, volunteers were not asked about The Green Tree because we wanted to focus on their involvement with BMCT. Local groups and partner agencies were not asked their opinion directly because of the difficulty in answering the questions from a group point of view, rather than an individual. Instead, they were asked more specific questions affecting their relationship with BMCT. Directors were the only group to be asked detailed questions about each activity listed under all four objectives. This was because they had the most intimate knowledge about all areas of BMCT activities.

3.3 Objective 1

To make Banff and Macduff better places to live, work and visit

Directors were asked to tick a box on a scale of ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’ to reflect their opinion of how well BMCT performed on the activities under Objective 1. The responses were as follows:

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
1.1 Running a community café and hub, The Green Tree	5	1	1		
1.2 Improving the appearance of the towns through In Bloom	6	1			
1.3 Creating training opportunities for young, unemployed and socially excluded	4	3			

Commentary

The results of the director’s survey show they feel that feel overwhelmingly that BMCT is performing as it should be in relation to Objective 1.

Social Audit Action Points

- Future audits would benefit from focus group discussions to draw out more information on opinions.

3.4 Objective 1 Case Study – The Green Tree

Activities: Running a community café and hub, The Green Tree; Creating training opportunities for young, unemployed and socially excluded

BMCT carried out a feasibility study on the conversion of the former Trinity Alvah Church in Banff into an arts and performance venue. What emerged from the study was that Banff lacked contemporary café facilities, and consultants recommended this be an integral part of the venue. The project did not go ahead, but BMCT was keen to apply the café aspect to another premises in the town. A former café and chip shop that had lain empty for 18 months was identified as a suitable premises. It was taking on an increasingly neglected appearance, and the next step for the landlord was to board up the front of the imposing town centre building to deter vandals. BMCT decided to progress the idea of a café at this venue because:

- It would create jobs and training
- It would improve the appearance of a run-down building
- It would increase the town centre offering for residents and visitors
- It would support local suppliers
- It would eventually generate an income for BMCT and help it move towards self-sustainability
- It previously operated as a café and restaurant and it was felt that it would have a lesser displacement impact.

BMCT took out a lease on the premises. The lease covers a 10-year period, with options for breaks at various points. It received a grant of £8,650 from Aberdeenshire Community Asset Fund to help with start-up and marketing costs. As well as operating a café and restaurant, The Green Tree was to have a takeaway and community hub. Major lapses in the timetable for opening meant it was launched on August 18th, 2010 without the takeaway and hub up and running. The time and effort involved in getting the café operating at the required standards has meant the additional offering is now scheduled for April 2011.

The Green Tree initially employed 17 people in full and part time positions. Following an early management restructuring, it became apparent that the number of staff in employment was not sustainable. Reductions in the staffing were achieved through redundancies and natural wastage. The initial issues with overstaffing highlighted the need for directors to be as hands-on as possible with the venture. They continue to be involved with the day-to-day operations, and now that The Green Tree has now been through a settling-in period, paid staff are working hand-in-hand with volunteers. At the time of writing this report, The Green Tree employs 10 people in full and part-time positions. The opportunity to work for BMCT enticed the current manager back to the local area after a spell working abroad and in other areas of the country.

From the outset, BMCT wanted to invest in staff training and identified opportunities for development. It was keen that staff could learn valuable transferable skills which would benefit them in future employment should they ever move on from The Green Tree. A breakdown of the courses provided are as follows:

Training/No of places	Training Provider	Date Carried Out
Customer Care (10)	DM Training	October 2010
Barista Training (17)	Caber Coffee	August 2010; October 2010
RIEHS Elementary Food Hygiene (10 – 2 yet to complete test)	DM Training	October 2010
RIEHS Intermediate Food Hygiene (1)	Aberdeenshire Council	October 2010

One member of staff is due to start SVQ Food and Beverage in January 2011, with the training being provided through DM Training. Working with the Banff Employment Services Team, it will also take on a kitchen trainee one day a week in January 2011, with the intention of preparing the individual for returning to full-time employment. It is hoped that this partnership will be expanded in future.

Three advisors at Banff Jobcentre Plus were asked to comment on the opening of The Green Tree and its impact on employment in the local area. Asked to assess the level of interest from jobseekers in employment opportunities, two replied “very interested” and one replied “interested”. Asked if they thought working for a community organisation had any bearing on a jobseeker’s wish to work for BMCT, two replied “don’t know” while one replied “no”. When the advisor was asked to expand on the “no” response, they replied “because jobs in Banff are like hen’s teeth.” Finally, the advisors were asked if they felt The Green Tree had been a positive addition to the Banff and Macduff area. They all answered “yes” and expanded on their answer with the following reasoning: “Employment”; “All jobs are welcome, especially 16+ hours”; “Giving opportunities to long-term unemployed, boosting their self-esteem and confidence.”

BMCT was also determined that the venture should champion local suppliers and producers wherever possible. Even though the cost of buying local may be less economic, BMCT made a conscious decision that if it was of good enough quality, was readily available and could be sourced locally, then it would be bought locally. In the period between August and December 2010, the amount of money spent with suppliers within a 10-mile radius of The Green Tree was £16,528 and within a 45-mile radius the spend was £11,275. A full analysis of the spend is outlined at Appendix 4.3. The Green Tree also sells the work of local artists and writers and earns a commission on sales in the process. It has joined forces with the Coast Festival of Visual Arts to stage a year-round exhibition, with sales commissions going to both The Green Tree and Coast.

In November 2010 in response to this Social Audit process, The Green Tree adopted a new customer comment card in which customers were asked to indicate their postcode. This has been extremely useful in helping to gather information about where our customers come from. Of the 27 collected, 11 came from the Banff area,

four came from the Macduff area, and 13 gave their postcode as other. There was no option to state the “other” postcode, although some customers did state this. Of those who did state, three were from Turriff, one was from Inverness, one came from Huntly, one came from Buckie, one was from Elgin and one was from New York.

The Green Tree has provided a shop window for BMCT, with membership increasing dramatically since it opened. Membership forms are available in the café. Of the 56 new members recruited between August and December 2010, 51 of the membership forms have been collected from The Green Tree.

The opening of The Green Tree has also been a driver for other activities. In December 2010, The Green Tree spearheaded a Giving Tree initiative to benefit families and individuals in need of extra support over the festive period. The public was asked to support the Giving Tree by donating a gift for a child, or food items for families and older people. The items were distributed by Aberdeenshire Council’s local social work office. In total, 160 families were assisted. Food gifts were distributed to dozens of senior citizens in Dounemount Care Home in Macduff and Banff Care Home. This was widely felt to be a success, and will be repeated in future. Organisations in other Aberdeenshire towns are following BMCT’s lead with similar initiatives. In January 2010, a Knit and Natter group was launched, aiming to bring people together through their enjoyment of crafts. The response to this group has been very favourable.

Stakeholder feedback

All stakeholder groups were asked their views on The Green Tree, with the exception of local groups and partners. Staff at The Green Tree were asked a selection of the same questions.

Directors were asked additional questions about the motivation behind opening The Green Tree. They were asked to tick the appropriate motivation from a series of possible answers, ticking as many as they wished. The results were: To provide an income stream for the Trust (5); To create jobs for Banff and Macduff (1); To provide training (1); To bring an empty building back into use (1); To provide an additional attraction in the town centre for residents and visitors (4). They were also asked to state what financial position they hopes to reach with The Green Tree, and the results were: Generating profit to allow the Trust to become completely self-sustaining (2); Generating profit to contribute towards the Trust being self-sustaining (5); Break even (0).

Members and non-members were asked if they were aware that BMCT had opened The Green Tree: 100% of the members were aware of this, compared to 74.7% of non-members.

Respondents were asked to tick a box on a scale of ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’ to reflect their opinion on statements about The Green Tree. The results were as follows:

Since The Green Tree opened its doors, Banff town centre has more to offer local residents and visitors

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
Members	19	26	3	1	
Non-members	10	19	17	3	2
Staff	7	1			
Directors	5	2			
GT customers	3	3			

The Green Tree has transformed the appearance of a prominent and run-down building in the centre of Banff in a positive way

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
Members	27	19	3	1	
Non-members	22	14	9	1	1
Staff	8				
Directors	6	1			
GT customers	3	3			

The Green Tree has created employment opportunities in the Banff and Macduff area

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
Members	19	30			
Non-members	12	20	3	2	3
Staff	6	2			
Directors	6	1			
GT customers	3	3			

The Green Tree supports local suppliers and producers

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
Members	19	23	7	1	
Non-members	14	21	9	1	3
Staff	7	1			
Directors	4	3			
GT customers	2	2	2		

The Green Tree will help to provide an income for the Trust

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
Members	18	26	5		1
Non-members	13	24	8		2
Staff	8				
Directors	3	3	1		
GT customers	2	3	1		

I have been a customer of The Green Tree because I want to support the work of the Trust

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
Members	27	18	3	1	
Non-members	10	17	12	3	2
Directors	7				
GT customers	1		4	1	

I will be a customer of The Green Tree in future because I want to support the work of the Trust

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
Members	27	17	4	1	
Non-members	11	22	8	1	5
Directors	7				
GT customers	2		3		

The Green Tree creates a warm, welcoming and friendly atmosphere

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
Members	19	20	7	1	1
Non-members	9	22	7	1	2
Directors	5	2			
GT customers	4	2			

The Green Tree is accessible for everyone in the community

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
Members	27	20	3		
Non-members	15	22	7	1	2
Directors	6	1			
GT customers	4	2			

I visit the town centre of Banff more since The Green Tree opened

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
Members	9	3	22	11	4
Non-members	2	3	24	7	9
Directors	4	1	2		
GT customers			4	2	

I spend more money in town centre shops in Banff more since The Green Tree opened

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
Members	6	3	24	11	5
Non-members	1	4	22	9	9
Directors	1	4	2		
GT customers			4	2	

Additional Comments (the full list can be viewed at Appendix 1.3)

- I wonder how many visitors haven't even stopped in the towns due to boarded up premises and lack of cafes like The Green Tree?
- The Green Tree is becoming quite a social centre! It seems to be attracting customers of all ages.
- The Green Tree is all on one level which suits me well as I am not able for the stairs now that I am almost 86.
- The Green Tree has provided an attractive, affordable meeting place for all age groups in the community particularly due to its easy accessibility for wheelchair users, parents with pushchairs and people who have mobility difficulties.
- The Green Tree has used public grant monies to set up in direct competition with a variety of local cafes, therefore rather than offering more facilities and increasing the size of the cake it is competing for the same piece of cake as other operators.

- The Green Tree has added to the diversity of Banff, and gives more choice of venue to its visitors.
- There is still work to be done in ensuring the Green Tree is warm, welcoming and friendly. Perhaps more staff training?
- I have not seen much evidence of community work in The Green Tree apart from the Giving Tree.

Commentary

Overall, the comments from respondents about The Green Tree were very favourable, with the majority of respondents answering either “strongly agree” or “agree” to most questions. The only exceptions to this were in relation to the time and money respondents were spending in Banff town centre following the opening of the café. As with the results of stakeholder feedback in relation to values and impact, those most closely linked with the organisation gave the most positive feedback. On the whole, members were more likely to be customers of The Green Tree, and were also more likely to support the café because of its links to BMCT. It could be said that members are motivated to support an organisation they belong to, so this results is perhaps not surprising.

Comments were made about the fact that The Green Tree had set up in competition with other businesses. BMCT was very much aware of the displacement issue prior to opening and gave this much consideration. The Board felt that as the premises had previously operated as a café and that its operation did not lead to the closure of other similar premises, the market was such that it was able to accommodate another offering of this type. In addition, the feasibility study flagged up the need for such a venture in Banff. Furthermore, the benefits of job creation and new business generated for local producers and suppliers outweighed the perceived minimal risk of displacement. The feedback from some respondents about accessibility also suggests that they previously did not make regular visits to other café premises.

It was hoped that in opening The Green Tree, people would have more of a reason to visit the town centre, thereby generating additional income for nearby shops. The majority of respondents were either neutral or disagreed to the statement ‘I spend more money in town centre shops since The Green Tree opened.’ While it would have been hoped that this feedback would have leaned more towards the positive, the length of time The Green Tree had been operating should be borne in mind. It was still in a settling in period and making a name for itself in the local community. The fact that a number of people did feel they spent more money in town centre shops indicates that the green shoots are in place: the challenge for BMCT is to find a way of nurturing that so that more local businesses get a spin-off from The Green Tree customers.

It was pleasing to note that members, non-members and other stakeholders are aware of the contributions being made in creating employment, supporting local suppliers, and improving the appearance of the town centre and facilities in it.

BMCT welcomes the comments about the accessibility of The Green Tree, in particular from older people, people with disabilities and parents with young children. It also notes the comments about the lack of progress on the community hub, but has firm plans to launch this in 2011.

The response rate from customers of The Green Tree is disappointing. This can perhaps be attributed to two factors. Firstly, responsibility for issuing the questionnaire was given over to staff at The Green Tree. As they were not involved in developing the Social Audit, they perhaps were not able to communicate the importance of it effectively. Secondly, many customers remarked that they would prefer to take it away rather than be bothered filling it out when they were at the café to eat and relax. All responses gathered from customers came from the café – none of those taken away for completion were returned.

Social Audit Action Points

- Redraft the customer comment card once again, this time asking customers to state their home postcode if it comes under the category of “other”. This will enable BMCT to gather more information about where customers come from. It may also be appropriate to ask if they are a returning customer to assess if The Green Tree is generating repeat business on the back of good service/experience.
- The method of collecting information from customers of The Green Tree needs to be reviewed so that it is more effective. Inviting customers along to a focus group may produce a greater volume of responses, or conducting one-to-one interviews on the premises while people wait for their food or drink.

BMCT Strategic Action Points

- Progress must be made on delivering the community hub in order to meet the pledge made to the community prior to the opening of The Green Tree. The hub may also attract more non-members into the premises, with the knock on effect that it increases the profile of BMCT.
- Consideration must be given as to how The Green Tree can benefit other shops, services and attractions in the town centre of Banff. BMCT will liaise with the local business association to identify ways in which this can be achieved, and how BMCT can assist with any planned initiatives. For example, the business association has previously given consideration to a town-wide customer loyalty scheme – is this something that BMCT can help to implement?

3.5 Objective 1 Case Study – In Bloom

Activity: Improving the appearance of the towns through In Bloom and the Shop Art and Living Spaces schemes

Following a BMCT public board meeting in 2009, it was suggested that one way of enhancing the towns would be through floral and horticultural improvements. In addition to improving the appearance of the towns for people who lived and worked there, it was also seen as a way of making them more attractive to visitors. As a result, the In Bloom sub-group was formed to take on this challenge. A number of directors from the BMCT board volunteer with this group, along with several volunteers from the wider BMCT membership.

At an early stage, it was decided that the major project for In Bloom in 2010 would be the erection of hanging baskets on business premises in both towns during the summer months. This was not something already done by Aberdeenshire Council, and it was felt that the project would enhance the displays provided by the local authority.

In order to carry out the hanging basket project, the volunteers identified properties in the towns where brackets were already in place or where there was evidence that brackets had previously been in use. Property owners were contacted to ask if they would be willing to display a basket, and the response rate was 100% positive.

In Bloom was successful in obtaining a grant of £6,371 from the Big Lottery Fund's Awards for All programme to buy equipment required for the project, including baskets, a trailer, tools, and fertilizer. The group was also successful in obtaining a bowser watering system from funds allocated to Macduff through the Scottish Government's Town Centre Regeneration Fund. In addition, donations totalling £155 were received from five local businesses and individuals in appreciation for the efforts of In Bloom.

In June 2010, the volunteers planted up 125 hanging baskets, erected them and watered them throughout the summer up until September. All of the baskets were removed for the winter, and during that process the volunteers had the assistance of Aberdeenshire Council's criminal justice section. A selection of photographs of the baskets are included at Appendix 2.1.

In addition to the hanging baskets, In Bloom volunteers also dedicated regular working sessions to maintaining garden areas of the towns. In 2010, the majority of their work was focused on the grounds of Banff Castle and Airlie Gardens – a large public garden within the Banff conservation area. In October, they were joined by over 50 people of all ages in planting over 1,600 daffodil bulbs at the Wrack Woods in Banff. The purpose of this was to create a daffodil walk in the woods, supplementing the already popular snowdrop and bluebell walks already established there. Volunteers also suggested that the main road gateways to the towns could be

enhanced with floral features. Aberdeenshire Council is now delivering this project to a design developed by one of the In Bloom volunteers.

In Bloom has developed a very positive working relationship with local officers from Aberdeenshire Council’s landscape services department, and the group would like to sincerely thank the staff for their advice, support and assistance.

Over the course of the In Bloom project in 2010, a total of 838 man hours were donated to the project by volunteers. If a basic rate of pay for a gardener/labourer in Aberdeenshire Council’s landscape gardening section was applied to the man hours (£7.50 plus 27% on costs), the financial value to the community would be £7,978. If landscape services had carried out the work at the request of a third party, such as BMCT, a departmental rate charge would apply. If an £18 an hour charge had been applied, the in-kind value rises to £15,084. A full breakdown of the man hours is available at Appendix 2.2.

Stakeholder Feedback

All stakeholder groups were asked their views on In Bloom, with the exception of local groups and partners and staff of The Green Tree. Directors were asked what they felt was the main motivating factor for the In Bloom project, and were asked to choose as many reasons as they felt appropriate:

To improve the appearance of the town centres	7
To help restore civic pride	3
To create a good impression of the towns for visitors	5
To provide opportunities for people to volunteer with the Trust	3

Members and non-members were asked if they were aware of the additional hanging basket displays in Banff and Macduff: 94% of members were aware of this, compared to 51.8% of non-members. Respondents were asked to tick a box on a scale of ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’ to reflect their opinion on statements about In Bloom. The results were as follows:

The hanging baskets made a positive difference to the appearance of Banff and Macduff

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
Members	33	20		1	
Non-members	7	22	2		2
Directors	7				
Volunteers	4				
GT customers	1	5			

The hanging baskets helped create a feeling of civic pride in Banff and Macduff

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
Members	25	24	5	2	
Non-members	7	17	7		2
Directors	4	3			
Volunteers	3	1			
GT customers		5	1		

Visitors would have gained an impression that Banff and Macduff takes pride in its town centres as a result of the hanging baskets

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
Members	26	20	7	1	
Non-members	6	21	4		2
Directors	5	2			
Volunteers	3	1			
GT customers		6			

If the Trust had not erected, maintained and watered the hanging baskets, the council or another group in the town would have done it anyway

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
Members	3	1	15	30	5
Non-members	1	3	12	9	6
Directors	1		1	2	3
Volunteers				3	1
GT customers			2	4	

Additional Comments (the full list can be viewed at Appendix 1.4)

- Would be good to address the imbalance between Banff and Macduff
- In Bloom has been a great project, from seed to show I feel it has showed Banff and Macduff as a visual feast of flora
- It is heartening and positive to see dedicated volunteers regularly maintaining the baskets and tubs around the towns
- Well maintained floral arrangements always improve the appearance of towns and look most welcoming to visitors. I also noticed volunteers working in Airlie Gardens.
- All the work involved is appreciated. Keep it up!

- The baskets really helped to brighten up the place. The council doesn't have money to spend on things like that and if the community trust isn't going to do it, no one else will
- We need a bit more of them, please
- Although hanging baskets can help to improve appearance there are issues with sustainability, eg growing annual plants/compost, etc. I would like to know how this is addressed

Commentary

It is perhaps disappointing that only 94% of members were aware of the hanging baskets project. Given that this is a flagship project of BMCT, it would have been hoped to achieve 100% penetration of members, as with their knowledge of The Green Tree. The fact that the awareness rate amongst non-members was only 51.8% - in comparison to 74.7% for The Green Tree - suggests that much work needs to be done to raise the profile of the In Bloom group. In addition to increasing the profile of the group, it may also result in more much-needed volunteers coming forward to assist In Bloom.

Overall the feedback on In Bloom from the stakeholder consultation was overwhelmingly positive. The majority of stakeholders responded "strongly agree" or "agree" to the first three questions. It was encouraging that, as well as recognising the difference the displays made to the appearance of the towns, the respondents stated that the baskets helped create a sense of civic pride in the community. If townsfolk walked through their town centres and felt proud of the way it looked, then In Bloom has gone a long way to delivering Objective 1. The impact that the displays would have had on visitors to the town was not lost on respondents either.

The responses to the final question are perhaps not so encouraging. There was a high number of "neither agree or disagree" to this question, along with more stakeholders within the membership and directorship of BMCT answering "disagree" or "strongly disagree". In Bloom had a close working relationship with Aberdeenshire Council – perhaps stakeholder groups felt this project had been planned by the local authority anyway and that In Bloom was carrying it out on the council's behalf? Perhaps they feel that this is the type of work that BMCT should be doing anyway, and it should not be in the remit of the council or other groups? Or perhaps there was difficulty in understanding the framing of the question? It would be impossible to make an informed opinion on this pattern without further investigation.

In the comments section, it was pleasing that many of the respondents used the phrase "volunteers". There has clearly been an acknowledgement that those involved in the In Bloom group are giving their time freely to benefit the community. It also appears from the feedback that this has been a very visible project, with some respondents referring to seeing volunteers going about their work.

A number of respondents also referred to the need for more hanging baskets and the need for more in Macduff. This has already been addressed, with 30 more sites

in Macduff identified. A consultation is currently underway with property owners, and those who agree will have baskets erected on their buildings this summer.

Social Audit Action Points

- In future social accounting processes, greater consideration should be given to the framing of questions in order to ensure that questions cannot be misinterpreted.
- As has previously been acknowledged elsewhere in this report, questionnaires should be supplemented with focus groups or one-to-one interviews in future processes in order to establish the reasoning behind unusual or puzzling trends and patterns.

BMCT Strategic Action Points

- In order to increase the profile of In Bloom, a concerted publicity drive will be organised in an effort to highlight the work of the group and increase more volunteers. In order to counter the possible perception that In Bloom is carrying out work that would normally be done by Aberdeenshire Council, it needs to be stressed that it is an entirely independent organisation and that the members of the group are responsible for identifying and delivering projects.
- The feedback is that local residents would like to see more floral enhancement work in the towns. In Bloom has already recognised this by extending the number of hanging baskets for this year, and they should continue to identify additional projects as manpower, time and resources allows.

3.6 Objective 2

To give more people and community groups a say in the development of their towns

BMCT is a membership organisation, drawing its members from those who live and work in the local community. Therefore, it is essential that the membership is at the heart of BMCT, driving it forward and steering its course. Every third meeting of the Board of Directors is open to members and the general public. Meetings are advertised in the local press, by direct mailshot to members, through the website and with posters around the town. Attendance at these meetings has been disappointing. During the period of these social accounts, five public meetings were held and a total of 42 members or members of the public attended. It should be noted, however, that there are a great many groups in Banff and Macduff, all of which also meet on a regular basis. It may simply be the case that people do not have time to attend or have conflicting appointments.

BMCT communicates with its members by quarterly newsletter, electronic mailings, its website and the local media. The newsletter was introduced in 2010, with editions distributed in April and September. A planned edition in December was abandoned due to the pressure of staff workloads, but there are plans to issue another mailing in March 2010.

Electronic mailings with “snippets” – such as the appeal to recruit volunteers with a one-off planting session organised by In Bloom or a new menu launch at The Green Tree – are sent to members who have email addresses. While it would be desirable to directly communicate these things with all members, the postal and production costs have made this prohibitive. BMCT enjoys a very positive working relationship with the local media, and has enjoyed significant levels of coverage for all areas of its work.

Both directors and volunteers were asked how they learned about the opportunity to get involved with BMCT. Four directors responded ‘word of mouth’ and three responded ‘Trust board meeting’. Of the volunteers, two responded ‘article in the press’ and two responded ‘word of mouth’.

Directors were asked to tick a box on a scale of ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’ to reflect their opinion of how BMCT performed on the activities under Objective 2. The responses were as follows:

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
2.1 Holding public meetings to allow the public to learn about the Trust and get involved in the work of the Trust	4	3			
2.2 Providing information on community development and the work of the Trust through website, letters and local press	4	3			
2.3 Encouraging members of the public to come forward with ideas for projects and encourage them to follow through to inception	4	2	1		

Commentary

The lack of connection with members through their non-attendance at meetings is worrying, as it is at these meetings where members have the chance to directly hear from the Board how projects are progressing and learn about future plans. Therefore, members have the opportunity to inform, influence and direct the Board as decisions are being made. BMCT needs to consider why members are not as involved as they could be, as their involvement is essential for the future sustainability of the group. It may be that the idea of meetings turn people off, and thought should be given to alternative methods of engaging members in the decision making process.

The most common method of people getting involved in BMCT is by word of mouth. This is encouraging, as it shows that people in the community are talking about BMCT and recommending the group to others as an outlet where they can get involved with the future of their towns. Therefore, the importance of active members spreading the word and encouraging others to get involved cannot be underestimated.

The Green Tree has also become a major source of recruitment of members, with all but a handful of the 51 new members in the period August-December coming from The Green Tree.

The results show that the directors agree overwhelmingly that BMCT is performing as it should be in relation to Objective 2. The one “neither agree or disagree” response at 2.3 would perhaps suggest that one director at least feels that there needs to be more interaction between the wider public and BMCT.

BMCT Strategic Action Points

- The reasons why BMCT is failing to attract members to its meetings must be investigated. A focus group could be held with members who responded to the consultation to establish reasons for their lack of interest. *Footnote: Based on the stakeholder feedback, the format of the January open meeting was altered into a Burns Night celebration. There was no formal ‘business’ but a presentation about the latest Trust news. This attracted the best ever attendance at a public meeting.*
- Directors and members should be encouraged to keep talking about the Trust. It may be an idea to encourage them to bring at least one friend to open meetings.

3.7 Objective 2 Case Study – Partnership Working

Activity: Working in partnership with other local organisations and bodies with similar objectives

In creating BMCT, the founding members wanted to ensure that the organisation would not seek to compete with existing, valuable groups in the town. It was the wish of BMCT to work together, not apart, to achieve the vision of making the towns better places to live, work and visit.

BMCT has devoted much time to developing relationships with local groups and is keen to work in partnership to develop projects where appropriate. One of the most significant advances made in this regard has been the inclusion of BMCT into the Banff and Buchan Local Community Planning Group. The work of BMCT has been incorporated into the local community plan, which fits with the Scottish Government’s National Outcomes.

BMCT has worked with the COAST Festival of Visual Arts in developing a joint project to examine alternative uses for empty and derelict buildings. It holds regular joint meetings with Banffshire Coast Tourism Partnership and Banff, Macduff and District Business Association, with the long-term aim of developing a significant project together that would fit the objectives of all three groups.

Stakeholder Feedback

BMCT consulted a wide range of local groups that it had some kind of relationship with during its lifetime. The main focus of the questionnaire was to determine the impact – positive or negative – that BMCT had on other organisations, and where there was scope for future development. In addition to the standard questions on BMCT’s values and impact, groups were asked about how they view their relationship with BMCT, its contribution to community planning, and any benefits they had derived from their involvement with BMCT. The results were as follows:

What has been the extent of your organisation’s relationship with the Trust to date? Tick all that apply

Have no relationship with the Trust	1
Member of Banff & Buchan LCPG	5
Networking	7
Developed project/event together	5
Sharing information/resources for community benefit	10
Other - BMCT are our tenants; Couple of meetings last year; Payroll, links to development and policy info (Bridge CVS).	

Has your organisation benefited from its relationship with the Trust?

Yes	12
No	2
No response	1

Those who answered no were asked to expand:

- I was reluctant to write 'no' as it is more negative than I want to be, however I suppose that with us being an older, more established organisation, most advice/support has actually flowed from us to you.
- After our meetings nothing came forward. We do however support the Trust's aims and ambitions

How has it benefited? Tick all that apply

Financially	2
Manpower/volunteers	2
Developing a project	4
Discussed/tackled community issues	8
Support for an event	3
Help/advice	4
Signposting	5
Networking	4
Other - Gives us a vehicle to link into other community groups.	

Has the existence of the Trust made a positive difference to your organisation?

Yes	9
No	1
Don't Know	3
No responses	2

Those who answered yes or no were asked to expand:

Yes

- We are a small team and the Trust has helped us with information on the local area and projects within the local area
- Issues raised at our meetings can be passed on to the community trust for their help and advice
- The research work of the Trust made a project in Coast 2010 possible, as well as adding the first funding to help trigger subsequent funding. The Trust has also supported the year-round presence of the festival organisation
- Has helped me to network with a variety of groups
- Positive contributor with respect to local issues and initiatives; keen participant in any events hosted by CPG; active contributor to Banff and Buchan local community plan.
- The Trust's aim is to improve community wellbeing in the area and look at opportunities for development and employment. All these factors are known to impact directly on crime and offences
- Payment of rent has helped improve our cash flow; In Bloom volunteers have improved the garden appearance

No:

- Information has flowed from us to you

Does your organisation feel that the Trust has contributed effectively to Community Planning in Banff and Buchan?

Yes 7
No 2
Don't Know 6

Those who answered yes or no were asked to expand:

Yes:

- The Trust is actively improving areas of Banff and Macduff both visually and productively
- The Trust actively contributes to community planning both as a partner member of the LCPG, in its own right and as a voice for the community
- The Trust has already tackled issues that matter to local people and has been successful in various projects around the towns
- The visual improvements the Trust has made have improved the local area significantly
- The opening of the Green Tree cafe in Castle Street, Banff, and the Trust's support for extending the expanding the local library on High Street, Banff is very positive and hopefully will remain open to local residents.
- Representation at Community Planning has raised its profile and encouraged partners to become involved.

No:

- We are not made aware of their contributions made to community planning, therefore assume that it is not effective

Commentary

In terms of the groups that BMCT has had the closest relationship with, their interpretation of the relationship has been extremely positive. It is clear that, on the whole, other local organisations and partner agencies see BMCT as having a benefit to the community and to their work in particular. Significantly, the majority of respondents noted that the benefit they had derived from BMCT was in collaborative work, whether that was through developing projects together, tackling community issues, or networking. This could be seen as evidence that BMCT is achieving its goal of working with other groups in partnership, not operating in competition. This is an excellent foundation, as these groups are the groups that BMCT is most likely to work with in future.

Two groups indicated that they had not benefited from a relationship with BMCT. While that could be considered a failure, what must be taken into account is that BMCT is still a very young organisation, and solid, mutually beneficial partnerships take many years to grow and develop.

The only section that showed mixed results was in relation to BMCT's contribution to local community planning. Partners in the LCPG answered this question most positively, while non-partners answered no or don't know. The reality is that, for those outwith the remit of the LCPG, community planning is quite often something

of a mystery. While it has to be accepted that the partners genuinely do not know about the contribution being made by BMCT, consideration must be given to the possibility that the partners are not familiar with community planning.

BMCT Strategic Action Points

- BMCT needs to ensure that the positive relationship with these groups continues and that they are aware of opportunities for collaborative working. Groups should be invited to attend open meetings, and they should also be added to the mailing list for BMCT newsletters and updates.
- All of the major activities of BMCT fall within the local community plan themes. While these themes are used in updates to community plan partners and Aberdeenshire Council, external groups – as well as members and the wider public – should be made aware of how these activities are linked to the community plan.

3.8 Objective 2 Case Study – Photo Project

Activity: Encouraging members of the public to come forward with ideas for projects and encourage them to follow through to inception

In spring 2009 BMCT instigated a Photo Project to survey what was most liked and disliked about the towns. Disposable cameras were distributed to a wide range of groups in Banff and Macduff, covering all age groups. These photographs were put on display at the official public launch of BMCT in May of that year. The photos returned showed that, by far, the most prevalent dislike was run-down boarded up properties and unsightly public places. These amounted to 64% of the photographs returned. BMCT then undertook a mapping project to identify the locations of run-down buildings so the problem of building dereliction could be tackled, using partner agencies where appropriate. The aim, in the short term, was to brighten up the buildings in order to reduce the negative impact on the towns, which is vital for community and business confidence.

It was clear that the public wanted something done about derelict and run-down properties in the town, and this was the driver for the first visible project undertaken by BMCT – Shop Art. Permission was received from the owners of a boarded up property in Duff Street, Macduff, for BMCT to work with local artists on a photographic mural to cover the wooden hoardings. The artwork depicting scenes of Macduff harbour by night was printed on vinyl and covered with a protective plastic coating. It was installed in December 2009. A grant of £1,000 was secured from Banff and Buchan Arts Forum to assist with the costs of the project. Photographs of the project are available at Appendix 3.1.

This idea was followed up in the Spring of 2010 when BMCT joined forces with the COAST Festival of Visual Arts. Two artists were commissioned for the Living Spaces Project to encourage the community to think how boarded up buildings and run down spaces could be reanimated while a commercial use can be found. A wrap around structure entitled The Sea House was created in a former industrial yard in Macduff, while two empty shops came in Bridge Street to life to reflect on the life and contribution of Macduff 'magician' Dr Walford Bodie. The lasting legacy to the community in the latter project was that the artist dramatically tidied up the appearance of the shop fronts. Photographs from the event are available at Appendix 3.2.

To some extent, the In Bloom project which aims to brighten up the towns with floral features, has also been in response to the issues of dereliction flagged up in the Photo Project.

These were examples of how BMCT wants to ensure that local people are given a say in the development of their towns. They were asked to tell BMCT what they liked

and disliked, and once in possession of that knowledge, BMCT responded with a project aimed at tackling an issue of real community concern.

As sustainability for BMCT post March 2011 crept further up the agenda, continuation of the Shop Art scheme became less of a priority. However, a small budget to deliver a similar project in Banff has been allocated and work is due to commence in Spring 2011.

3.9 Objective 3

To build and utilise the strengths and skills of the community

The firm foundation of strong, sustainable communities exist lies in its people. There is recognition on the part of BMCT that people in the local community are key to delivering the vision of the organisation. If BMCT is to grow into a sustainable organisation, it needs to use the skills and strengths of the people it serves and, where appropriate, give them the tools to develop.

BMCT is a company limited by guarantee, but owned by the membership. The Board of Directors is elected from the membership, and outwith the AGM there is scope to co-opt onto the Board members or others in the community who hold skills that would be beneficial to the development and growth of the organisation. With the exception of one paid member of staff, the Operations and Development Manager, all those with a day-to-day involvement of the running of BMCT are unpaid volunteers. Unpaid volunteers are also involved in delivering the In Bloom project and are involved because of their skills or interest in horticulture. At the time of writing the report, the core number of In Bloom volunteers, outwith the directorship, was five.

Employment and training opportunities at The Green Tree have already been covered elsewhere in this report under Objective 1, and this section therefore focuses mainly on the way in which the Trust builds and utilises the strengths and skills of the community through its volunteer opportunities.

Directors were asked to tick a box on a scale of 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' to reflect their opinion of how BMCT performed on the activities under Objective 3. The responses were as follows:

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
3.1 Creating employment and training opportunities at The Green Tree	7				
3.2 Volunteering opportunities through In Bloom and contributing to the general running of the Trust	5	1	1		
3.3 Opportunity to become in the Trust at all levels, from membership through to active director	6	1			

Commentary

The results of the director's survey show they feel that feel overwhelmingly that BMCT is performing as it should be in relation to Objective 3.

Social Audit Action Points

- Future audits would benefit from focus group discussions to draw out more information on opinions.

3.10 Objective 3 Case Study – Directors

Activity: Opportunity to become involved in the Trust at all levels, from membership through to active director

BMCT was set up in January 2009 by as a successor to the Aberdeenshire Towns Partnership. Many of the founding directors were involved with the ATP through the Local Strategy Group, and it was natural for them to play a part in launching BMCT and steering it through its early stages. Other founding directors became involved because of their interest in helping to develop the local community by tackling social and economic issues. In total, seven directors were involved in BMCT from the outset, with a further two being co-opted from the membership in the autumn of that year.

At the first annual general meeting in June 2010, two founding directors stood down. BMCT was aware that it was to lose these two valuable directors, and so made an appeal through the Press and through its newsletter for members and other interested parties from the local community to come forward and offer their services. The result was that two people came forward and were appointed to the Board. In November 2010, one other member was co-opted onto the Board, and around the same time one other director resigned his post.

The current crop of directors hold an interesting clutch of skills which BMCT calls on to help with the smooth day-to-day running of the organisation. These skills cover everything from the legal and finance, to IT and the social sector.

Three of the founding directors were able to gain training about their roles and responsibilities through a training course run by Development Trust Association Scotland. The modules covered in this training course are now also presented to new directors as part of an information pack about BMCT and their duties as directors.

Directors are encouraged to attend workshops, forums and symposiums wherever possible to enable them to continue their development. Indeed, two of them were involved in the Social Accounting and Audit taster session which gives rise to this report.

Stakeholder Feedback

Directors were asked to explain the motivating factors behind their decision to get involved with BMCT. They were given a number of choices and asked to select the most appropriate answer(s). The results were:

Something to do	0
Interested in the Trust	2
Wanted to be part of a team	0
Wanted to contribute to the local community	7
To gain training	0
To pass on skills to others	0

They were also asked to indicate how they heard about the opportunity to become a director. They were given a number of choices and asked to select the most appropriate answer. The results were:

Email to Trust membership	0
Trust newsletter	0
Trust website	0
Article in the Press	0
Word of mouth	4
Trust Board meeting	3

Directors were asked to tick a box on a scale of 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' in response to various statements about their role as a volunteer. The response was as follows:

I feel the Trust has supported me in my role as a volunteer

SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
4	3			

I feel that I have received appropriate training and guidance to carry out my role(s)

SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
4	1	2		

I feel that I can approach the staff and directors of the Trust with new ideas for projects and ways in which to develop existing projects

SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
5	2			

I feel the work I am asked to carry out on behalf of the Trust is of value to the community

SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
5	1	1		

I feel as though my contribution is valued and recognised by the Trust

SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
4	3			

I feel that the Trust is building and utilising the strengths and skills of the community by offering volunteering opportunities

SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
3	3	1		

Commentary

By far and away the most common reason for a director becoming involved with BMCT was because they wanted to contribute to their local community. This is pleasing, as the community is the driving force behind BMCT and its basic principal is to improve the towns. The fact that no one answered that they wished to gain new skills or wanted something to do perhaps shows that they do this selflessly, and expect nothing in return for giving up their time.

Most directors heard about the opportunity to get involved as a director either through word of mouth or a BMCT meeting. This needs to be considered from two different perspectives. The first point of view is a positive one: for people to sign up through word of mouth, it would indicate that BMCT is being spoken about in a positive tone, and if people are signing up following a meeting, it would indicate that they have been impressed with what they saw at that meeting. However, the second point of view perhaps flags up the need to be cautious about recruitment of directors. If recruitment mainly takes place through a 'magic circle', the BMCT board could be seen to run the risk of being run by people who undergo some form of prior selection. It should be stressed that the current Board have by and large not previously had any connection to each other prior to their involvement in BMCT, but nevertheless it would be pleasing to see evidence of a more varied recruitment process in the next set of social accounts.

The directors feel supported in their role as a volunteer. However, given the complexities and legal implications of being a director of a company limited guarantee, it was somewhat unsatisfactory that two directors replied 'neither agree or disagree' in response to receiving appropriate training and guidance.

Directors felt they had a good relationship with BMCT: they felt they could come forward with ideas and felt that BMCT recognised the contribution they made. It is noted that one director replied 'neither agree or disagree' in response to whether they felt their work was of value to the community: without further discussion it would be impossible to speculate why this was the case.

Of all the questionnaires returned, those from the directors showed the least number of additional comments under the various sections. This shows that the directors would benefit from more focused discussions to draw out feedback about their involvement and experiences.

BMCT Strategic Action Points

- Processes for recruitment of directors should be examined, and certainly in advance of the next AGM in June 2011.
- Discussions will be held with directors to identify skills gaps which they would wish to be addressed with further training.
- The stakeholder feedback from directors will be explored at a meeting in the hope of facilitating further discussion about the themes that emerged in the consultation.

3.11 Objective 3 Case Study – Volunteers

Activity: Volunteering opportunities through In Bloom, Living Spaces and contributing to the general running of the Trust

As time has passed since the inception of BMCT, it has become apparent that volunteers are needed to supplement the work of the directors and paid staff. This is none more apparent in the case of In Bloom, which is delivered entirely through volunteers, all of whom are members of BMCT. In addition to the directors involved in the In Bloom group, five other volunteers regularly give their time to the project. Their contribution in man hours, already highlighted in this report, can be viewed at Appendix 3.2. A huge success for In Bloom was an appeal for volunteers to come forward to help with planting up 1600 daffodils in the Duff House Woods: over 50 people of all ages from the local community came forward to assist.

At present In Bloom is the only regular volunteering opportunity offered by BMCT, but people do give assistance on a more sporadic basis. For example, two professional artists have given advice about future Shop Art projects (both of whom are members of BMCT). There has been no formal recording process for these sporadic volunteers. This social accounting process has highlighted the need to record this information, and records have been in place since January 2011.

During the period of these social accounts, membership of the Trust gradually increased from a start of zero to 230. Therefore, outwith the Board of Directors, 1.7% of the membership regular contributes to BMCT on a voluntary basis.

Stakeholder Feedback

The five In Bloom volunteers (four responded) were asked to explain the motivating factors behind their decision to get involved with BMCT. They were given a number of choices and asked to select all that applied (hence a total of six responses). The results were:

Something to do	0
Interested in the project	1
Wanted to be part of a team	0
Wanted to contribute to the local community	4
To gain training	0
To pass on skills to others	1

They were also asked to state how they heard about volunteering opportunities with BMCT. The responses were:

Email to Trust membership	0
Trust newsletter	0
Trust website	0
Article in the Press	2
Word of mouth	2
Trust Board meeting	0

Volunteers were asked to tick a box on a scale of 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' in response to various statements about their role as a volunteer. The response was as follows:

I feel the Trust has supported me in my role as a volunteer

SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
2	2			

I feel that I have received appropriate training and guidance to carry out my role(s)

SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
2	1	1		

I feel that I can approach the staff and directors of the Trust with new ideas for projects and ways in which to develop existing projects

SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
3	1			

I feel the work I am asked to carry out on behalf of the Trust is of value to the community

SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
3	1			

I feel as though my contribution is valued and recognised by the Trust

SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
2	1	1		

I feel that the Trust is building and utilising the strengths and skills of the community by offering volunteering opportunities

SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
2	2			

Additional comment (only one received):

- I have always felt that when I came to the end of my working life, I would look forward to having the time to put something back into the community, while using the skills I have gained. The Trust has enabled me to do this. I have had such a lot of fun, made new friends and feel I am doing something worthwhile. I have been made to feel that my skills and opinions are appreciated. It is a great morale booster to see the results of our team efforts brightening the area up and hope that, in time, it will encourage others to join.

Commentary

It was again pleasing to note that all volunteers said that they wanted to volunteer with BMCT because they wanted to contribute to the local community, and especially important was the one response which stated that the volunteer wanted to pass on skills to others. This fits exactly with the overall aim of Objective 3 to build and utilise the strengths and skills of the community.

Again, it appeared that there was a trend for people to volunteer through word of mouth which would imply that BMCT is spoken about in a positive manner. In this case, two volunteers came forward after reading an appeal in the local press, and this medium must be given due consideration in future volunteer appeals. It should be noted that at the time of forming In Bloom, it was not usual practice for e-mails to be sent out to the membership, and the quarterly newsletter had not started production at that time.

The responses to the various statements about being a volunteer were very encouraging on the whole. However, it is acknowledged that there was one 'neither agree or disagree' to the statements on appropriate training and guidance, and being made to feel valued by BMCT. In terms of the latter, it has to be viewed somewhat differently to the same 'neither agree or disagree' that was recorded in the directors feedback. It could be said that as directors make up BMCT, then the onus on ensuring they are made to feel valued by BMCT rests within their own Board. For volunteers, the experience is a little different. They are not operating within the organisation on a day-to-day level, and for even one volunteer to be indifferent as to whether their contribution is valued by BMCT is unacceptable. A volunteer policy is in place and this sets out what the volunteer can expect from BMCT across a wide range of issues, including direction, support and working environment. Conversely, the policy also sets out what BMCT expects of its volunteers.

The fact that a tiny 1.7% of the membership regularly volunteer is extremely disappointing. It is unclear why this should be the case, but BMCT needs to look at it from a number of angles. It may be that BMCT is not good at communicating the volunteer opportunities. On the other hand, given the incredible response to the daffodil planting exercise, it may be that people are interested in one-off opportunities to contribute to their community, as opposed to giving a regular amount of time each week or month.

In Banff and Macduff, as with any community, there are people who possess a huge number of different skills. The challenge for BMCT is to find ways of engaging with its membership and the wider community to harness those skills, not only for the benefit of BMCT, but for the benefit of the community at large where a domino effect of upskilling can occur.

BMCT Strategic Action Points

- The methods in which volunteers are recruited and retained need to be scrutinised and an action plan developed. It may be possible to create a bank of volunteers who would be available for one-off projects in addition to those available for more regular commitments. *Note: In November 2010 the operations and development manager attended a one-day course in Effective Volunteer Recruitment, arranged by Volunteer Development Scotland. This has led to more formal procedures being put in place to record the details, availability, interests and skills of volunteers. In addition, recruitment campaigns will now take a more even-handed approach: they will communicate the key message that volunteering is a two-way process with benefits for both BMCT and the individual.*
- There should be more formal recognition of the contribution made by volunteers. There is a range of ways in which this can be done, such as formal thank-you letters, an evening dedicated to celebrating their achievements, or coverage in the local press.

3.12 Objective Four

To effectively manage the Trust and its people

In order to achieve a service level agreement and acquire grant funding from Aberdeenshire Council for core and development costs for a two year period, BMCT was required to submit a business plan. This plan, covering the period 2009-2012, was submitted and approved by the council in June 2009. The model, as with all business plans, has not been left to sit on the shelf until the point of its expiration. Three out of the four projects contained within the plan failed to materialise within the first year of operation, and BMCT had to respond to that by identifying new opportunities, particularly in relation to developing an income stream post March 2011.

BMCT has not been short of ideas on how it can reach a position of sustainability through its projects, but the reality is that such projects take time to develop. For example, BMCT is pursuing the potential of deriving an income from a small scale wind generation scheme, but the complexities of such a project are such that it could be 2014 before it was up and running.

The one project that BMCT has delivered in terms of income generation is The Green Tree. At the end of this social accounting period, The Green Tree had only been operating for a little over four months. Therefore, it has not been possible to comment on how The Green Tree has been performing in terms of Objective 4 at this time.

Directors were asked to tick a box on a scale of 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' to reflect their opinion of how BMCT performed on the activities under Objective 4. The responses were as follows:

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
4.1 Developing an income through The Green Tree	3	3	1		
4.2 Offering reasonable terms and conditions to employees	4	3			
4.3 Providing training and personal development opportunities for staff and volunteers	5	2			

Commentary

It appears that directors are of the opinion that BMCT is performing as it should under Objective 4. One director responded 'neither agree or disagree' in response to 4.1, while the others all said 'agree' or 'strongly agree'. Given that the financial impact of The Green Tree to BMCT is still to be established, it could be said that the positive responses are perhaps recognition that this is the eventual aim.

Social Audit Action Points

- Future audits would benefit from focus group discussions to draw out more information on opinions.

3.13 Objective 4 Case Study – Employees

Activities: Offering reasonable terms and conditions to those employed by the Trust;
Providing training and personal development opportunities for staff and volunteers.

During the period of this set of social accounts, BMCT has employed one full-time operations and development manager, paid on a salary basis. At the time of opening, The Green Tree employed 17 people in full and part-time positions in both front of house and the kitchen. Staff numbers have now reduced to 10 through a programme of redundancies and natural wastage. Staff are paid an hourly rate: four part-time staff are paid in line with the minimum wage requirements for their age banding, and the remainder are paid above the minimum wage level to reflect their skills set and/or senior position.

As has been outlined under the case study for The Green Tree at Objective 1, there has been a programme of training for employees. The operations and development manager of BMCT has also benefited from training, undertaking a day course on writing successful funding applications in April 2010, a social accounting workshop in May 2010, and a day course in volunteer recruitment in November 2010.

Stakeholder Feedback

Staff were asked whether the fact that BMCT as an employer contributed to the wellbeing of the community was a factor in their decision to work for BMCT. Three out of the eight respondents said yes, four said no, and one did not respond. They were asked to outline how they heard about the job vacancy. The results were:

Advertisement	1
Jobcentre	1
Word of mouth	4
Applied on spec	2

Prior to working for BMCT, four staff stated that they were employed, three were unemployed and one gave no response. Asked how long they had been unemployed for, two said less than three months and one did not respond.

Staff were asked to state what their likely employment status would be had it not been for the job offered by BMCT. The responses were:

Unemployed	1
Employed	5
In further education/training	1
Other	1

Staff were asked to tick a box on a scale of 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' in response to various statements about their employment. The response was as follows:

I am paid a reasonable wage for the work that I do

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
4		3		1	

I work reasonable hours

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
3		5			

I am offered a reasonable amount of time off/holidays

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
6		1	1		

My employment contract offers reasonable terms and conditions

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
5		3			

I am happy in the work that I do

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
5		3			

I have been provided with training opportunities to help carry out my employment

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
4		2	2		

I feel there is opportunity to progress and develop skills in the organisation I work for

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
7		1			

I feel the work I do is valued by my employer

	SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
6		1	1		

I feel I can contribute ideas to improve my workplace, working practices and performance of the organisation

SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
5	2	1		

I feel that the job I do contributes to the wellbeing of the community

SA	A	NAOD	D	SD
8				

Additional comments (two comments received)

- A workplace where the building is like your second home and the people inside are your family
- I have good hours but would like more weekend work

Commentary

The consultation results from the staff of BMCT are indeed very pleasing, and BMCT is content that these are a true and accurate representation of staff opinion given the assurances over confidentiality. It would be fair comment to say the overwhelmingly positive nature of the consultation was a little surprising. At the time staff were issued with questionnaires, the BMCT Green Tree board had to take the very hard decision to make redundancies in order to ensure the future sustainability of the business. There was a concern that staff morale would be affected by this, but it is clear from the results that staff believe BMCT is a good employer and that they are treated well as employees.

In relation to the one 'disagree' response to the statement "I am paid a reasonable wage for the work I do", this is understandable given that some minimum wage bandings are quite low. While BMCT would like to pay all its staff above minimum wage, it is not possible to do this until firm trading patterns are established. Set against that response, it should also be noted that feedback relating to hours, holidays and terms and conditions were positive.

One of the most satisfying results is the response to the statement: "I feel there is an opportunity to progress and develop skills in the organisation I work for." It may be that this is partly due to the investment BMCT has made in its staff from a training perspective: perhaps staff see that BMCT is serious about equipping them with skills that will enable them to perform to the best of their abilities and develop as employees. It may be that the general culture promoting staff from within to senior posts is viewed as evidence that there are opportunities to progress within the organisation.

In terms of The Green Tree, regular staff meetings are held where both the directors and staff can raise issues affecting the general running of the business. They are encouraged to speak freely and openly. There is no set pattern in the occurrence of

staff meetings, but generally they happen every four to six weeks, or as and when the need arises. Café team meetings are also held on an as and when required basis. In addition, an ideas scheme is also in operation where staff are encouraged to submit an idea that will make a difference to working practices, or perhaps generate additional income. One idea is selected every month and, as well as seeing their idea implemented, they receive a small gift as a token of appreciation. Given these two initiatives, it is somewhat disappointing that feedback relating to these areas was not 100% positive.

Finally, it was interesting to note the responses to the statement about the value of work to the community. That shows, quite clearly, that employees within BMCT see their work beyond providing a service, or merely earning a wage. There is strong recognition that their employment ultimately benefits the community.

BMCT Strategic Action Points

- Move to scrapping minimum wage hourly rate if the financial performance of the business allows, or introduction of other benefits such as free or discounted meals.
- At present, only the board and the manager are aware of the feedback from customer comments cards. Initially, the results were posted on the staff notice board but that practice, for no particular reason, ended. This should be reinstated.

Section 4 - Environmental Impact

Until embarking on the social accounting process, the environmental impact of BMCT was not high on its agenda. An environmental policy was adopted in 2009, which was by and large to satisfy a requirement from grant funders for such a policy. No formal recording processes were in place to measure performance in relation to the policy. For the purposes of these social accounts, The Green Office checklist which forms part of 'Social Audit and Accounting: The Manual' has been used to make an assessment of performance. The completed checklist for both the BMCT and The Green Tree can be viewed at Appendices 5.1 and 5.2 respectively.

What transpired from the checklist was that both premises were already following many examples of good practice. Both premises recycles paper, tins, glass and ink cartridges, scrap paper is used as notepaper, non-essential copies are printed on re-used paper, and emails are used wherever possible.

At the end of 2010, The Green Tree moved to a system of receiving invoices/statements via email from most suppliers and now pays most bills by internet banking rather than by cheque through the post. As well as being kinder to the environment, this has resulted in a cost saving.

It has not been so easy to reduce the amount of paper and envelopes being used by BMCT. Over 70 members have opted not provide an email address and in the spirit of inclusiveness – a core value of the organisation – all these members receive newsletters and other correspondence via traditional mail. What BMCT hopes to do in future, however, is to hand deliver as much of these mailings as possible.

In terms of energy consumption, much of the information for BMCT was not relevant as the office is rented as a serviced office. Issues regarding insulation, boilers, etc are the responsibility of the landlord, however the landlord has recently appointed a carbon reduction officer and has been involved in a range of initiatives to improve the environmental performance of the building.

As BMCT is a community organisation with a remit specifically in the towns, there is very little need to make mileage claims for travel. On occasions when there has been a need to travel distance by car, it is because there has been no or poor access to public transport or because the times of the public transport has not been in line with the needs of BMCT. During the period of the social accounts, 880 miles were made by car, paid at a rate of 40p per mile to give a total of £352. In comparison, 190 miles were made by public transport at a cost of £65.10.

BMCT Strategic Action Points

- Encourage members to provide email addresses for communication with BMCT, and consider hand delivering where possible.

Social Audit Action Points

- Implement the action points within The Green Office checklist before the next social accounting cycle, and put monitoring systems in place to assess the impact of these changes.

Section 5 - Economic Impact

This section of the social audit will look at the financial aspects of BMCT by attempting to evaluate the economic impact on the towns of Banff and Macduff. It will also touch on the impact to the wider Grampian area. BMCT had only produced one set of annual accounts during the period of the social audit, and these follow at Appendix 4.1. In order to give a wider flavour of the economic impact of the Trust, income and expenditure records covering the entire social accounting period have been used.

The Green Tree is making the most significant economic impact on the local area, and the impact to date has been set out earlier in this report under Objective 1. Given that The Green Tree had only been trading for a little over four months at the time of preparing these social accounts, no financial information in the form of annual accounts is available. However, income and expenditure sheets from its trading period within this social accounting period have been used to record data against local spend.

Local spending

As a community development trust, it is incumbent to support local suppliers of goods and services as much as possible. Although BMCT would like to keep all its business in the towns, it can be the case that the service required simply does not exist within the local area. The information in the table below (Figure 4.1: BMCT Economic Impact Table) sets out where BMCT has used its discretionary spending. In terms of spending under the Banff and Macduff heading, this incorporates services within a 10-mile area of the towns. A full analysis is available at Appendix 4.2.

	B&M	Grampian	Scotland	UK	Total
Spend in £	16,633	11,743	8,888	4,893	42,157
%	39.4	27.8	21.2	11.6	100

Figure 4.1: BMCT Economic Impact Table

In the duration of the social accounting period, BMCT spent just over 39% of its discretionary funding with suppliers of goods and services in Banff and Macduff and the surrounding 10-mile area. Extending the net to cover the Grampian area, the percentage of discretionary spend kept within the North-east is just over 67%. It should be noted that in the case of spending within Scotland, 85.5% was spent with one company to obtain specialised renewable energy consultancy that was not available locally or in Grampian. In terms of UK spend, 83% was used to purchase hanging baskets that could not be obtained locally or in Grampian. The figures contained in the table will be used to allow comparisons in future social audits.

A multiplier effect can be used to give an assessment of the wider economic implication of BMCT's spending on the local area. LOCAL – an organisation similar in size and scope to BMCT based in England – calculated the return of 1:1.63. BMCT

used this benchmarked figure and applied it against its own local spend. BMCT's spend in Banff and Macduff could be between £16,633 on a zero multiplier, or £27,111 when introducing a ratio of 1:1.63.

It should be noted that staff salaries are not included in the economic impact.

In terms of the economic impact of The Green Tree, the information is set out in the table below. A full analysis of the spend is available at Appendix 4.3. **(Figure 4.2: Green Tree Economic Impact Table).**

	B&M	Grampian	Scotland	UK	Total
Spend in £	16,528	11,275	6,933	18,590	53,326
%	30.9	21.1	13.2	34.8	100

Figure 4.2: Green Tree Economic Impact Table

It can be seen that 30.9% of The Green Tree's discretionary spend has been kept within Banff and Macduff, and adding Grampian to the figure, the percentage of spend remaining within the North-east is 52%. The spend with UK suppliers is the highest, but caution should be used when considering this as the figures are not representative of how spend will be allocated in future. Some 32% of the national spend was used on start-up costs: these are one-off costs which would not be repeated in future years and therefore the spend against national suppliers should be lower. Although BMCT attempted to obtain as much equipment as possible in the local area, some of what was required simply did not exist nearby. For example, five shops within a 25 mile radius of Banff and Macduff were visited in order to purchase five matching coffee tables for the comfortable seating area. None of the shops were able to provide the quantity required, or give an assurance that they would be able to source them within the required time frame. Therefore, the only option was to use a national supplier that carried a large stock of one item.

It should also be noted that there are no wholesalers based in Banff and Macduff from which to order frozen and dry goods. It is common practice within the catering industry to use large national wholesalers, and The Green Tree is no different. This also increases the spend against national suppliers. A change of management in The Green Tree has, however, brought about a real sea change in the practice of ordering dry and frozen goods. A large proportion of the stock is now being sourced from a Scottish supplier, and there are plans to move more of the stock order to a firm based in Aberdeen in order to claw back even more of the spend from national suppliers.

A multiplier effect can be used to give an assessment of the wider economic implication of The Green Tree's spending on the local area. The Green Tree's spend in Banff and Macduff could be between £16,528 on a zero multiplier, or £26,940 when introducing the ratio of 1:1.63. The Green Tree was trading for a little over three months during the period of the social accounts: assuming the total local spend each quarter is the same, the annual amount spent locally would be in the region of £66,000. Apply this to the multiplier of 1:1.63, and the figure is £107,580.

Although staff salaries are not included in the economic impact, the jobs created through The Green Tree cannot go without comment. The majority of staff live in the local area and as a result of the employment that they are in, have salaries to spend with local business. At least three staff members were unemployed prior to securing a job at the café, and therefore there will be a saving to the public purse through reduction of benefits. Attention should also be drawn to the stakeholder feedback on The Green Tree, in which 17% of respondents replied either 'strongly agree' or 'agree' when asked their level of agreement on the statement, 'I spend more money in town centre shops in Banff since The Green Tree opened.'

In addition to the financial contribution made by BMCT, there has also been in-kind volunteer contribution. The contribution made by volunteers through In Bloom project was 838 man hours, which is equivalent to an in-kind value of £7,978. Many grant funders expect the applicant to make some kind of contribution to the project, and often this can be done through in-kind contribution. It is clear that it would be useful for the practice of recording volunteer hours to be applied across all of BMCT's activities.

Social Audit Action Points

- The recording system of local and national spending was not in place prior to this social audit. Now that it exists, it should be maintained in order to inform future social audits and to generally keep track of spend to ensure that it remains in Banff and Macduff wherever possible.
- A recording system should be created to record the man hour contribution made by all volunteers, including directors, with a financial leverage applied where appropriate.

Section 6 - Compliance

6.1 Staff Handbook

All staff are issued with a staff handbook at the commencement of their employment. This handbook contains information on all of the policies that BMCT complies with:

- Hours and pay
- Holiday allowance
- Statutory Sick Pay
- Maternity leave and benefits
- Paternity leave
- Bereavement and compassionate leave
- Grievance and disciplinary procedures
- Trade union membership
- Equal opportunities
- Health and Safety

BMCT also has a Data Protection Policy. New employees are required to consent to their details being stored and processed in line with the policy when signing their contract, and a copy of the policy is provided to them.

6.2 Staff Appraisals

All staff receive an annual appraisal on the anniversary of them joining BMCT. During the period of these social accounts no member of staff reached the first anniversary and no appraisals were carried out.

6.3 Financial Governance

BMCT is bound by and follows the financial management procedures as set out in the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

Section 7 - Actions, Reflections and Next Steps

7.1 Key Aspects

A key aspects checklist has been completed as part of the social audit process and is available at Appendix 8.

7.2 Summary of Action Points

One theme which emerged consistently throughout the consultation was the need for more methods to be used in gathering stakeholder feedback, and this is applicable across the board. The summary of action points is as follows:

Values and Core Principles

BMCT Strategic Action Points:

- Improve communication with stakeholders by continuing with the quarterly members' newsletter and continuing to make it available in both electronic and paper format. The paper version should be circulated more widely to community venues – The Green Tree, community centres, libraries, doctor surgeries, etc - in order to reach more non-members. Any important news between newsletters should also be relayed.
- BMCT will do more to encourage participation and attendance at open board meetings, and look at the format to make the events more appealing.
- Increase the profile of directors as an authority on local issues, making media outlets aware they are available to comment on issues of community importance.

Objective One

Social Audit Action Points

- Redraft the customer comment card once again, this time asking customers to state their home postcode if it comes under the category of "other". This will enable BMCT to gather more information about where customers come from. It may also be appropriate to ask if they are a returning customer to assess if The Green Tree is generating repeat business on the back of good service/experience.
- The method of collecting information from customers of The Green Tree needs to be reviewed so that it is more effective. Inviting customers along to a focus group may produce a greater volume of responses, or conducting one-to-one interviews on the premises while people wait for their food or drink.
- In future social accounting processes, greater consideration should be given to the framing of questions in order to ensure that respondents answer questions in the way they intended to.

BMCT Strategic Action Points

- Progress must be made on delivering the community hub in order to meet the pledge made to the community prior to the opening of The Green Tree. The hub may also attract more non-members into the premises, with the knock on effect that it increases the profile of BMCT.

- Consideration must be given as to how The Green Tree can benefit other shops, services and attractions in the town centre of Banff. BMCT will liaise with the local business association to identify ways in which this can be achieved, and how BMCT can assist with any planned initiatives.
- In order to increase the profile of In Bloom, a concerted publicity drive will be organised in an effort to highlight the work of the group and increase more volunteers. In order to counter the possible perception that In Bloom is carrying out work that would normally be done by Aberdeenshire Council, it needs to be stressed that it is an entirely independent organisation and that the members of the group are responsible for identifying and delivering projects.
- The feedback is that local residents would like to see more floral enhancement work in the towns. In Bloom has already recognised this by extending the number of hanging baskets for this year, and they should continue to identify additional projects as manpower, time and resources allows.

Objective Two

BMCT Strategic Action Points

- The reasons why BMCT is failing to attract members to its meetings must be investigated. A focus group should be held with members who responded to the consultation to establish reasons for their lack of interest.
- Directors and members should be encouraged to keep talking about the Trust. It may be an idea to encourage them to bring at least one friend to open meetings.
- BMCT needs to ensure that the positive relationship with groups continues and that they are aware of opportunities for collaborative working. Groups should be invited to attend open meetings, and they should also be added to the mailing list for BMCT newsletters and updates.
- All of the major activities of BMCT fall within the local community plan themes. While these themes are used in updates to community plan partners and Aberdeenshire Council, external groups – as well as members and the wider public – should be made aware of how these activities are linked to the community plan.

Objective Three

Social Audit Action Points

- The stakeholder feedback from directors will be explored at a meeting in the hope of facilitating further discussion about the themes that emerged in the consultation.

BMCT Strategic Action Points

- Processes for recruitment of directors should be examined, and certainly in advance of the next AGM in June 2011.
- Discussions will be held with directors to identify skills gaps which they would wish to be addressed with further training.

- The methods in which volunteers are recruited and retained need to be scrutinised and an action plan developed. It may be possible to create a bank of volunteers who would be available for one-off projects in addition to those available for more regular commitments.
- There should be more formal recognition of the contribution made by volunteers. There is a range of ways in which this can be done, such as formal thank-you letters, an evening dedicated to celebrating their achievements, or coverage in the local press.

Objective Four

BMCT Strategic Action Points

- Move to scrapping minimum wage hourly rate if the financial performance of the business allows, or introduction of other benefits such as free or discounted meals.
- At present, only the board and the manager are aware of the feedback from customer comments cards. Initially, the results were posted on the staff notice board but that practice, for no particular reason, ended. This should be reinstated.

Environmental Impact

Social Audit Action Points

- Implement the action points within The Green Office checklist before the next social accounting cycle, and put monitoring systems in place to assess the impact of these changes.

BMCT Strategic Action Points

- Encourage members to provide email addresses for communication with BMCT, and consider hand delivering where possible.

Economic Impact

Social Audit Action Points

- The recording system of local and national spending was not in place prior to this social audit. Now that it exists, it should be maintained in order to inform future social audits and to generally keep track of spend to ensure that it remains in Banff and Macduff wherever possible.
- A recording system should be created to record the man hour contribution made by all volunteers, including directors, with a financial leverage applied where appropriate.

7.3 Reflections on the Social Audit Process

BMCT entered into its first social accounting and audit process with a degree of trepidation. The more the social accountants found out about the process, the more overwhelming it seemed. However, everyone involved with the organisation recognised that the end benefit would help BMCT move on and grow as an

organisation and there was an agreement that as much staff time and resources as possible be ploughed into the exercise.

The timescales were largely dictated by the need to provide feedback on social accounting to Aberdeenshire Council by the end of the funding agreement in 2011. There is a feeling that the process would have been even more beneficial if the timescale had been longer and staff resources had been greater. There was a slight feeling of disappointment that all stakeholder consultation was carried out by means of questionnaire, as the use of one-to-one interviews and focus groups could have teased out more information.

Prior to commencing the process, one of the main concerns was the collection of quantitative data and it was feared that that this was an enormous task. However, it soon became apparent that much of this information was already there: it just needed to be gathered and presented in a more meaningful way. The need to continue to accurately record information has not been lost on BMCT, and this is something that the organisation will continue to implement across all areas of work.

From the outset, BMCT felt that it was perhaps a little early in its lifespan to be going down the route of social accounting and audit. It is now felt that this has actually worked in BMCT's favour: at an early age it has been able to get meaningful feedback from stakeholders, identify areas of its performance that need to improve, and embed processes relating information gathering and recording into its activities. In summary, BMCT feels it has genuinely benefited from the process and feels that it now has a very clear picture of where it has been and where it now needs to go. BMCT believes that it has emerged from the process as a stronger, savvier and more mature organisation.

7.4 The Next Steps

Social accounting themes will continue to feature prominently in the work of BMCT. Now that it recognises the importance of recording and collecting information, the systems now put in place will remain in operation. In future, consideration will be given as to how recording data, both quantitative and qualitative, can be incorporated into all new BMCT activities.

In order to reduce the amount of work and improve the quality of the data for future social audit cycles, efforts will be made to consult stakeholders as part of an ongoing process. For example, at the conclusion of the next In Bloom summer season, it would be preferable to stage a focus group with the volunteers rather than stage a mass simultaneous consultation with all stakeholder groups. BMCT now knows that planning and ongoing recording is key to a streamlined and smooth social audit process.

BMCT is yet to formally decide how often it will produce an audited set of social accounts, but there is a general feeling that, if resources allow, it would be useful to produce these every two to three years. The range of stakeholders involved will

again be dependent on time and resources, but it is hoped that the proposal for ongoing stakeholder consultation will allow all stakeholder groups to feed in to the process.

7.5 Publication

Following the formal audit of the social accounts, BMCT will be made available this report available to a number of different sources. These are:

Aberdeenshire Council

Elected members of Aberdeenshire Council

Board of Directors

Staff

Members

Banff and Buchan Community Planning Group

Local groups as identified as stakeholders in this set of social accounts

Funders – existing and potential

Social Audit Network

Aberdeenshire Social Enterprise Network

The report will also be posted on the BMCT website, and an executive summary will be placed within The Green Tree. The executive summary report will also be made available to media outlets, along with a summary press release.

A summary document, possibly in the form of a tri-fold leaflet, will also be produced to flag up some of the headline figures about the Trust and key milestones and achievements.