



# GROUNDWORK STRATEGY

2023-2028





# OUR MISSION

## GROUNDWORK SUPPORTS PRACTICAL ACTION TO CREATE A FAIR AND GREEN FUTURE IN WHICH PEOPLE, PLACES AND NATURE THRIVE.

We believe that working with local communities and businesses to help them build their capacity and resilience is vital if we are to tackle hardship, achieve a just transition to net-zero and help nature recover in a way that reduces inequality and leads to better work and healthier, happier lives.

What this means in practice is: helping people get jobs and supporting the growth of the green economy; reducing the waste of energy, food and water; creating and maintaining biodiverse, accessible green spaces; supporting businesses to be more successful and responsible; and empowering communities to take action to improve their health and wellbeing and the local and global environment.

The way we work:

- connects people with each other, with opportunity and with nature
- builds knowledge and confidence so that people feel more in control of their future
- delivers social, economic and environmental outcomes in an integrated way



# WHY OUR WORK IS NEEDED...

- > The number of people not working due to long-term sickness has been rising since 2019 and now stands at more than **2.5 million**
- > More than **6.5 million** households are experiencing fuel poverty with **21.5%** of excess winter deaths attributable to cold homes
- > Almost **3 million** people in the UK used a food bank in the last year and **40%** of people report feeling worried about being able to afford food
- > **2.8 million** people in the UK do not have any publicly accessible green space within a 10-minute walk of their home
- > **40%** of people from ethnic minority backgrounds live in the most greenspace-deprived areas, compared to **14%** of White people
- > More than a **million** adults and nearly **three-quarters of a million** children in the UK live in neighbourhoods where air pollution is double recommended levels
- > More than **40%** of adults in the UK report feeling anxious about the environment and globally **60%** of children and young people say they are extremely or very worried about climate change



## GROUNDWORK IN ACTION: **GROWING GREEN JOBS FOR NATURE**

New to Nature is an initiative funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and managed by Groundwork, providing 12-month paid work placements in the environment sector. Recruitment is targeted at groups under-represented in the sector, specifically young people with disabilities or from a low-income or ethnic minority background. There are currently 95 participants undertaking work with an array of employers, delivering biodiversity improvements and nature recovery, looking after urban green spaces, and connecting communities with the outdoors. Employees are supported through group sessions and a Groundwork employment coach to help them develop their careers.



# OUR IMPACT

## THE CHANGE WE DELIVER

We work with people who are facing multiple challenges and in places that are lacking social infrastructure and economic opportunities. Many of the places we prioritise are also increasingly vulnerable to extreme weather events.

We have four decades' experience of building partnerships to address these challenges in three connected ways.

- > **We help people improve their prospects** – increasing confidence, skills, wellbeing and employability and helping those out of work find jobs in the green economy
- > **We help people create better places** – making communities greener, healthier and better prepared for the future and enabling people to work together to bring about change in their local area
- > **We help people protect the planet** – supporting people and businesses to reduce their carbon footprint, cut waste and take practical action to combat the climate and nature emergencies



# OUR WORK CONTRIBUTES TO UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

- > **Goal 1 No poverty** – helping people into work and building the resilience of those who are most vulnerable
- > **Goal 7 Affordable and clean energy** – improving energy efficiency and promoting renewables
- > **Goal 8 Decent work and economic growth** – creating jobs and enterprise and helping young people into work
- > **Goal 11 Sustainable cities and communities** – improving green spaces, promoting sustainable transport and improving air quality
- > **Goal 12 Responsible consumption and production** – reducing waste and promoting positive environmental behaviours among communities and businesses
- > **Goal 13 Climate action** – promoting practical action and strengthening the resilience of communities to cope with climate-related events
- > **Goal 15 Life on land** – protecting ecosystems and stopping biodiversity loss



## GROUNDWORK IN ACTION: HELPING PEOPLE TO SAVE ENERGY AND TAKE CONTROL OF THEIR BILLS

Groundwork is being supported by the Cadent Foundation to expand its Green Doctor programme. Green Doctors offer a free, impartial service that helps people to save energy, reduce their bills, and live more comfortably in warmer homes. They can fit practical energy-saving measures in the home, share energy-saving tips to support behaviour change, and also signpost people to local specialist services to address health conditions, debt and safety issues such as faulty gas appliances or damp, mould and condensation. Green Doctors work with public and private partners to ensure support reaches those who need it most.



# OUR

# COMMITMENTS

## THE GROUNDWORK APPROACH...

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We deliver our impact through a range of projects, programmes and services that respond to local need and opportunity but that are developed and informed by the following core commitments.

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- > **We work where there is most need and we can have most impact** – prioritising our resources and building partnerships so that we can bring about lasting change
- > **We listen to local voices and empower people** – ensuring our work is shaped by those it is designed to benefit and strengthens community assets and infrastructure
- > **We embed equity and inclusion in everything we do** – addressing injustice and seeking out a diversity of viewpoints, both in the work we do and the people we employ
- > **We learn from local practice to promote wider change** – sharing the lessons from our work so that we can influence policy and contribute to system change
- > **We are collaborative and innovative** – forging strong partnerships and working with others to develop new ways of working and achieve greater impact
- > **We are environmental exemplars** – championing practical action to combat the climate and nature emergencies and measuring and reducing our own environmental impact



## GROUNDWORK IN ACTION: **BUILDING SKILLS, CONNECTING COMMUNITIES**

Groundwork's Greener Horizons project is supporting people in Belfast to gain qualifications while spending time in nature. Over 24 weeks participants from a wide range of backgrounds including refugees and asylum seekers work with volunteers in community gardens and green hubs across the city while working towards a qualification in horticulture or ICT. Participants are offered a £30 weekly cash card for food and a bus pass. The process facilitates improved physical and mental health, and assists the formation of new relationships and career opportunities.

# OUR GOALS

## COLLECTIVE DELIVERY PRIORITIES

Groundwork is a federation, with each member responding to the needs of local communities and the priorities of local partners in their area.

Working together as a network helps us share learning and good practice, operate at greater scale and ensure communities everywhere are able to benefit from our expertise and services.

Our collective effort over the next period will be focused on achieving the following goals.

### 01. TO HELP MORE PEOPLE OVERCOME HARDSHIP AND ISOLATION

#### We will achieve this by:

- > expanding the coverage and scope of our programmes to help people reduce household bills and live in healthier homes
- > growing our network of community hubs – places where people can connect with neighbours, access support and volunteer



## GROUNDWORK IN ACTION: CREATING COMMUNITY HUBS

The five Groundwork Trusts operating across the North of England have developed the Northern Network of Green Community Hubs – places at the heart of local communities that connect people with each other and with local services. Hubs are being developed to act as focal points for volunteering, skills training and social prescribing and the network is helping them learn from each other and share their approaches. The network is being complemented by a Green Leadership Programme, providing training for community leaders, plus a range of online resources to inspire others to set up their own projects.



## 02. TO HELP BUILD THE GREEN ECONOMY

### We will achieve this by:

- embedding environmental skills into our programmes of education and employment support and providing supported routes into entry-level green jobs
- expanding our work to help businesses benefit from sustainability and to nurture green enterprise



## GROUNDWORK IN ACTION: **BOOSTING THE ENERGY EFFICIENCY OF OUR BUILDINGS**

Groundwork is working with local authorities, housing associations, businesses and community organisations to reduce costs and carbon by improving the energy efficiency of buildings. Expert advisers are helping people in fuel poverty to access grants to upgrade their homes, working with charities to help them improve the performance of their buildings and providing support to businesses on their journey to net zero. We are also developing new employment support programmes to help more people access careers in the energy and retrofit industries.

### 03. TO HELP THOSE WHO MOST NEED IT CONNECT WITH NATURE

#### We will achieve this by:

- > continuing to develop and deliver programmes that create and improve open spaces in areas lacking green and blue infrastructure
- > working with partners to help people who currently miss out to improve their health and wellbeing by engaging in outdoor activities and environmental action



#### GROUNDWORK IN ACTION: **CONNECTING FAMILIES WITH NATURE**

Wellies in the Woods is Groundwork's family learning programme giving parents and children under five the chance to bond and learn by being outdoors. Sessions are based on famous storybooks, and aim to increase the confidence of families, and those workers who support them, to explore the natural environment. The approach strengthens networks in local communities and brings families together without technology through activities like bug hunting or den building. The programme fosters an outdoor learning atmosphere that promotes the benefits of natural play with activities that can be easily replicated at home for little to no cost.



## 04. TO HELP MORE PEOPLE AND PLACES RESPOND AND ADAPT TO CLIMATE CHANGE

### We will achieve this by:

- > developing our capability to contribute to programmes that retrofit homes to improve energy and water efficiency
- > helping more communities prepare for extreme weather through training, capacity building and the design of natural solutions

Progress towards these goals will be assessed on an annual basis through our federation impact framework. We will remain responsive so that our expertise and capacity can be used to address new needs and priorities as they arise over the next five years.



## GROUNDWORK IN ACTION: **REDUCING FLOOD RISK IN URBAN AREAS**

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) protect communities by helping excess rainfall drain away, reducing the risk of flooding in urban areas caused by tarmac and block paving. Groundwork's landscape architects are at the forefront of designing and implementing SuDS and other natural solutions to climate change. This includes working with water companies to help householders conserve water and helping schools reduce the threat from air pollution by planting 'green screens' between playgrounds and busy roads.



## GROUNDWORK IN ACTION: **ENCOURAGING HEALTHY EATING IN SCHOOLS**

With funds generated by Veolia, Groundwork is creating 'mini orchards' in schools to encourage healthy eating and to help children learn where food comes from. Fruit trees are being planted in unused playground areas alongside other features to encourage wildlife and increase biodiversity, helping children make a positive difference on the environment and helping teachers maximise the learning potential of outdoor spaces.



## GROUNDWORK IN ACTION: **PROVIDING FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY PROJECTS**

Groundwork helps communities take action on the issues that matter to them - providing the funds, confidence and expert advice needed to improve the local environment, to support healthy living and to support children and young people. Through our partnership with Tesco we have distributed more than £100 million to more than 50,000 groups and are now helping to support schools and young people through the Stronger Starts programme. We are working with Comic Relief, HS2, government departments and businesses to make sure their funds reach the places that need them most.



# OUR

# ORGANISATION

Groundwork is a learning organisation and we continue to challenge ourselves to be more effective in the way that we manage and deliver our work so that our resources can be used to achieve greatest impact.

## **Our collective priorities for improvement are as follows:**

- > to ensure we are impact-driven and making more informed decisions about our delivery we will increase the quality and consistency of the data and feedback we capture
- > to increase the diversity and capability of our organisation we will create better routes into entry-level roles and more opportunities for colleagues to learn and develop their careers
- > to lead by example in tackling injustice and the climate and nature emergencies we will continue embedding our commitments to sustainability, equity and inclusion in the work we do and in the way we work

Each of these priorities will be progressed through a collective action plan and monitored through our shared quality standards.







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