



Birchwood Big Local Annual Report 2023



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Foreword

Throughout all the challenges this last year has brought, we have been working hard to bring lasting change to many aspects of the life of our Birchwood Big Local area.

We at Birchwood Big Local recognise that people, post covid, are still cautious at meeting face to face, therefore we are still holding most of our meetings via Zoom.

It has been a privilege to be the Chairman of Birchwood Big Local and to be part of a group of people whose passion, motivation, hard work and at times sheer determination to succeed has been a pleasure. We have welcomed new members on the Partnership Board, plus new volunteers to help deliver our projects who bring their own unique skills and qualities to help the community in the Birchwood Big Local area flourish.

To date, of which we are proud, we have created a children's play area, ten speed indication devices, defibrillators, benches and plant locks. These, as well as supporting many organisations with grants, plus numerous events which have been well attended by the community.

We have continued to press ahead with our plans for further improvements to Diamond Park, and our play area project on Jasmin Green. This year we can finally start to see much of what we have planned and worked hard for come into being.

We look forward to a challenging and eventful year and one where we can meet and engage further in person. If you want to see lasting improvements to our area and would like to join this wonderful group of people, please get in touch.

Eddie Strengiel, Chairman of Birchwood Big Local

About Big Local

Big Local is a £200 million Big Lottery funded programme that is managed by Local Trust and its key outcome is to create a lasting change in the local community. The key features that make Big Local different to (and more exciting than) other programmes is that it is entirely community led, building on local talents and aspirations, creating a long term, lasting change using at least £1 million over at least 10 years. Birchwood was one of 150 areas chosen to benefit from this programme.

Big Local has 4 key outcomes

- Communities will be better able to identify local needs and take action in response to them
- People will have increased skills and confidence, so that they continue to identify and respond to needs in the future
- The community will make a difference to the needs it prioritises
- People will feel that their area is an even better place to live

Big Local was established with a number of core key features that make it different from other programmes. It is:

- *Long term* – providing certainty and continuity, over 10-15 years
- *Resident-led* – working directly with individuals living, working, studying and playing in areas rather than through organisations; building confidence and capacity amongst those wanting to make a difference to their community and their local area
- *Non-prescriptive* – enabling residents to spend on their own terms and in their own time, on the projects they judge to be most important to them
- *Patient and non-judgemental* – giving communities the time and opportunity to learn, make mistakes, resolve disagreements and overcome challenges for themselves, on their way to achieving their ambitions
- *Accompanied by flexible and responsive support* – to help communities to build the confidence and capability to make the most of the opportunities available to them, whilst not constraining their own ambition and initiative

About Birchwood Big Local

We are a group of people who are passionate about engaging and involving local people, listening to what is important to them and using this information to shape projects that will benefit our community.

Birchwood Big Local Partnership Board

The Partnership Board, which is made up of local residents, was endorsed in November 2014. The Board is a group of enthusiastic, committed volunteers who wish to empower local residents to build a stronger, safer community. Working together to achieve this the Partnership Board have met monthly or bi-monthly since then with additional meetings as and when required. There are currently 15 Board members, many of whom have been involved from the start of the Big Local journey in 2012.

Together, they bring many skills, experience, commitment, and passion to Birchwood Big Local and its Partnership Board. Regular attendees who provide support include Lincolnshire Co-op who are the locally trusted organisation, the Police, Local Councillors and others.

Currently, there are 5 sub-groups set up, these are Communications, Green Spaces, Jasmin Green Amenity Area, Community Engagement and Diamond Park. The sub groups are made up of Partnership Board members and other residents who have an interest in the particular theme.

The Board recognise the importance of encouraging new members to join and help support and develop projects and they will continue to recruit new members over the coming years.

Birchwood Area Community Land Trust Limited (BACLT)

Following the formation of Birchwood Big Local, it soon became obvious that there was a need for a mechanism to enable land and property to be held on behalf of the residents of the Birchwood Big Local area. This would also enable Birchwood Big Local to progress the ownership of Diamond Park and other properties.

After considering all the possible options the Partnership Board decided to form a not-for-profit Community Benefit Society, Birchwood Area Community Land Trust Limited (BACLT). The land trusts founding board was made up of local residents who already sat on the Partnership Board.

BACLT is financed through share purchases and grants from outside bodies made towards current projects. Funding support is also given by Birchwood Big Local, covering all costs incurred by BACLT while progressing projects on behalf of Birchwood Big Local.

Birchwood Big Local assisted BACLT to obtain the ownership of Diamond Park.

BACLT will be the body which will continue the work of Birchwood Big Local after the end of Birchwood Big Local in 2026.

Our Locally Trusted Organisation

Our locally trusted organisation is the Lincolnshire Co-operative Society who have supported and assisted us over the past 8 years. They have their head office in Lincoln, and have a team of staff we can, and do, call upon for support.


They manage and monitor all financial matters relating to Big Local funds and offer guidance and support to ensure guidelines and procedures are adhered to. They also provide a wealth of advice and support from their specialist staff which is invaluable.

Our priorities

By the end of the ten years we want

- a. Our community to be cleaner, brighter and safer with more people benefiting from our parks and green spaces
- b. Birchwood Big Local area to be where children and young people thrive by creating more opportunities for them
- c. To create 'a great community', where people look out for and support each other and provide more opportunities for interaction
- d. To raise the aspirations of people living in our community and reduce child and family poverty


Our Legacy



A cleaner and safer community through provision of Speed Indicator devices and Environmental improvements



A place where more young people benefit from new play provision by installation of play facilities on Jasmin Green



A community that is socially connected and supportive of each other through delivery of existing and future projects



A community benefiting from improved parks and green spaces

Our achievements

Community Grants

In 2023 A number of Community Grants have been awarded to local groups to assist them with their local projects and on-going costs. Grants of up to £500 are available to local groups to apply for. In 2023 the total amount awarded was £1,944.

An application form can be found by following the link on our website at

<https://birchwoodbiglocal.co.uk/community-grants>

Birchwood Foodbank

During 2023 we supported our local Foodbank with funding to purchase those extra special items that people who are struggling financially need.

Birchwood Big Local has also made a grant towards the installation of a Foodbank storage facility at Arise Church. Enabling our local Foodbank to further expand to meet the increased local demand.

Jasmin Green

Right from the outset Birchwood Big Local have has ambitious plans to develop a play area in the centre of Birchwood on Jasmin Green. This grew into a much larger project, where the long-term sustainability of the play area into the distant future would be ascertained. In discussions with City of Lincoln Council an agreement was reached where they would transfer the ownership of a large portion of Jasmin Green to Birchwood Area Community Land Trust (BACLT). The Land Trust would lease part of the land to a Housing Association who would construct affordable properties for the over 55's. The lease fee paid by the Housing Association would then fully fund in perpetuity, the remaining portion of land in the ownership of BACLT including the proposed play area. In 2020 full planning permission was granted for the construction of 28 traditional bungalows, 5 dormer bungalows and 16 family houses. The full costs of bringing the development to the construction stage was met by a large grant from Homes England. The project was ready for construction.. Legal agreements for the transfer of the land were in the final stages and agreements developed with a Housing Association. Then the Covid Crisis hit the nation, followed by the Ukraine war! As a result, construction costs rose to such a level the Housing Association and subsequent ones approached by BACLT were no longer able to meet the construction costs of the project.

As a result Birchwood Big Local has approached the City of Lincoln Council who have indicated that they are open to Birchwood Big Local constructing the play area on their land. On completion it will be transferred into the City's ownership along with full responsibility for management and maintenance of the play area.

It is expected that the construction will be completed early 2025.

Diamond Park

Improvements: We made some quite exciting improvements in the park this year. The main entrance was completely re-paved. New signage installed and 2 community notice boards fitted. A number of grassed areas suffering damage from high footfall were also paved. A new secure area was created and a brand new storage container installed, enabling tools and equipment for work in the park to be stored onsite.

Volunteering: Diamond Park is maintained and managed by local volunteers who regularly hold volunteering events where volunteers help to spruce up the park, making it the great place it is for children to play and adults to relax.



Co-Op Volunteers

Events in the Park 2023:

A joint activity with Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust – “Going Wild in Diamond Park”
King Charles III Coronation Picnic
Craft and Tabletop sale
Donkey and Petting Farm - A free Donkey and Petting Farm event, including Face - Painting – Crafts and Party Bags
Autumn planting event
Christmas Celebration in the park – “Tree decorating”



Welcome to Diamond Park





To help all users to enjoy our park please follow the rules below

<p>Use of Diamond Park is at your own risk</p> <p>Children under the age of 7 years must be accompanied by a responsible adult at all times</p> <p>No glass or alcoholic beverages are to be taken into the park area</p>	<p>Proper footwear should be worn when using play equipment</p> <p>Improper use of play equipment is prohibited</p> <p>Bicycles and scooters must not be ridden in the park</p> <p>Dogs must be kept on a lead</p>
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Community Engagement

Birchwood Big Local has a group who work hard at developing a greater level of community engagement. This involves meeting with local people and organizing local events. These have included -

February 18th Puppets take charge in the Birchwood Breakthrough Center.

March 18th Going wild in Diamond Park.

April 8th Easter event in the Birchwood Breakthrough Center.

May 6th King Charles III Coronation picnic in Diamond Park.

June 17th Crafts, tabletop sale and volunteers sign up day in Diamond Park.

August 19th Kelly's Donkeys and Petting farm in Diamond Park.

October 7th Autumn planting in Diamond Park.

November 25th Christmas Event in the Birchwood Breakthrough Center.



The Community Engagement group have also held 10 Drop-in sessions throughout the year, enabling local people to ask questions and make suggestions.

The group has also arranged stands at a number of local events and activities held by other local organisations.

Birchwood Big Local Community Co-Ordinator

In February 2023 Birchwood Big Local engaged “Penny” as our Community Co-Ordinator for the express purpose of developing stronger links between Birchwood Big Local and other local community groups.

Penny has already made links with 15 groups and is busy coordinating a directory of contact details. This will enable the local community to see all the activities that are taking place locally.

Since February Penny has also assisted a number of groups to collaborate and communicate together, enabling them to better support the area and also -

- Prepared a list of activities that take place
- Contacted an existing weekly group and put them in contact with Lincolnshire Co-op to develop a Community Cuppa in Birchwood
- Liaised with organisations to make them aware of the new group, and how they can both support it and benefit from it

- Liaised with groups to advise of funding and support opportunities available via. (Birchwood Big Local, Community Champions, Lincolnshire Co-op and Voluntary Centre Services, volunteer database amongst others)
- Provided information for local publications
- Supported the Partnership Board and its Subgroups with Admin

Birchwood Big Local Communications Group

Birchwood Big Local is supported by a small group of volunteers who oversee the Community Grant scheme and all communications.

The main source of communications is either via our website

www.birchwoodbiglocal.co.uk.

Or via Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/LincolnBigLocal>

On Facebook there is a high level of engagement giving a reach of 3,000 + over a 90 day period.

Birchwood Big Local also has a <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfDiamondPark>

Facebook page which has an engagement over 90 days of 2,200 +.

All the above are regularly updated with the latest news and notices of Birchwood Big Local and other organisations local events.

Speed Indicator Devices

The Speed Indicator Devices we previously installed have proven highly successful at reducing speeding in the Birchwood area and have probably saved lives.

As a result, in 2023 we have installed 2 more making it 10 in total!

Speed Indicator Devices near the schools on Woodfield Avenue.



The next steps

We have ambitious plans over the next 2 years. The range of initiatives we plan to take forward are shown below.

Support and provide training to existing and new volunteers
Hold and administer meetings to agree projects and priorities

Support and help to sustain Birchwood Area Community Land Trust who own Diamond Park on behalf of Birchwood Big Local and the Birchwood community

Keep residents updated on activities and projects through articles and publications, social media, networks, and the website

Provide Community Grants for local community groups

Keep making improvements to Diamond Park including implementation of a range of projects

Support and encourage existing and new volunteers

Hold and support a number of community events and activities across the Birchwood Big Local area

Make environmental improvements

Install more litter bins and possibly seating across the Birchwood Big Local area

Continue to support Birchwood Foodbank

Install play facilities, benches, picnic tables, litter bins and make environmental improvements on Jasmin Green

Conclusion

Guided by the priorities we established in consultation with our residents, Birchwood Big Local continues to address the needs and challenges of our community. We continue to look for new projects that will make lasting change in Birchwood.


We have aspired to far greater goals than we ever first imagined and continue to look ahead to the next challenge.

None of the work we carry out would be possible without the hundreds of hours each year, contributed by our amazing and wonderful team of volunteers that make up Birchwood Big Local. Without their drive, passion, commitment, dedication and sheer hard work, none of this would have happened.

We hope you will come along and join us in the rest of the journey.

With thanks

Birchwood Big Local Partnership Board

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Local Trust | Big Local

Financial report to December 2023

	Budget May 22- Dec 23	Spend	Budget Remaining	Budget Total
Admin and Operations	13,195.00	4,568.54	8,626.46	27710
Birchwood Area Community Land Trust	10,515.00	4,490.58	6,024.42	16605
Communications Sub Group	5,000.00	322.70	4,677.30	10000
Community Grants	5,000.00	3,706.30	1,293.70	10000
Diamond Park - Operations, Maintenance and F	53,000.00	47,733.73	5,266.27	66000
Diamond Park - Volunteer Support & Feasibility	11,200.00	31.12	11,168.88	12500
Events	5,000.00	1,677.37	3,322.63	10000
Green Spaces	45,000.00	7,785.60	37,214.40	60000
Jasmin Green - Environmental Improvements	30,000.00	-	30,000.00	50000
Jasmin Green - Maintenance	5,000.00	-	5,000.00	16000
Jasmin Green - Play area	260,000.00	3,600.00	256,400.00	260000
Project Worker	26,745.00	12,839.27	13,905.73	52500
Tackling poverty	5,000.00	10,000.00	(5,000.00)	10000
Contingency	-	2,000.00	(2,000.00)	6257
	474,655.00	98,755.21	375,899.79	607572
Contribution to support grant admin and partnership running costs	23,732.76	4,937.76	18,795.00	30378.6
	498,387.76	103,692.97	394,694.79	637950.6
Community Champions	603.57		603.57	
Community Champions - Diamond Park	3,221.59	1,160.23	2,061.36	
	502,212.92	104,853.20	397,359.72	