

Hill Holt Wood Social Enterprise and Community Woodland



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Contents page	2
Acronyms	3
Executive Summary	4
1. Introduction	7
2. Methodology	8
3. Background and wider context	9
3.1 Social and human capital	9
3.2 Social enterprise and social entrepreneurship	9
3.3 Education and learning	10
3.4 Community woodland	10
3.5 Health and well-being	11
3.6 Crime and anti-social behaviour	12
3.7 Forestry and Planning	12
4. Overview of Hill Holt Wood	13
4.1 Aims, objectives and ethos	14
4.2 Woodland environment and infrastructure	14
5. Social Enterprise and Community Woodland	16
5.1 HHW organisational structure	16
5.2 Staff skills and Investors in People status	18
5.3 Income streams: past and present	18
5.4 Financial status	24
5.5 Networking and events	24
6. Future plans and ideas	25
6.1 Social housing and possible change of ownership	25
6.2 Replication of the Hill Holt Wood model	25
6.3 Eco-burial country parks	25
6.4 Gateway to Lincolnshire	26
6.5 Probation Service	26
6.6 Manufacturing	26
7. Summary and Conclusions	27
8. Recommendations	30
9. References	32

Acronyms

DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
E2E	Entry to Employment
EMDA	East Midlands Development Agency
ETF	Environment Task Force
FC	Forestry Commission
HHW	Hill Holt Wood
ILM	Intermediate Labour Market
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
NEF	New Economics Foundation
SEEM	Social Enterprise East Midlands

Executive Summary

Introduction

Hill Holt Wood (HHW) is a 14 hectare deciduous woodland situated on the Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire border. Its owners who bought the woodland in 1995 have developed a social enterprise that currently employs fourteen people including the owners themselves. The social enterprise primarily provides vocational training for young people (who have been excluded from school or are unemployed) and it has contracts for this with statutory agencies. Through the education and training provided HHW are able to address wider issues relating to youth crime, dysfunctional behaviour and educational exclusion.

This study was undertaken to explore and describe what has taken place at HHW in terms of its sustainability and to try and gain an understanding of what could be learnt or whether a similar approach could be applicable elsewhere. The research methods for this work involved interviews with HHW staff, key individuals from organisations that have contracts with HHW, Forestry Commission staff and HHW Board and Executive members. A Board and Executive meeting were attended as well as an event held in the wood as part of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

Key aspects of the HHW project

What is significantly different about HHW is that it is a small woodland in which a large number of people are being employed through income primarily generated by working with excluded, at risk or unemployed young people. HHW is situated in a rural location within a rural county. Over 67 per cent of businesses in Lincolnshire employ less than five people (Lincolnshire County Council, 2002). HHW is one of a relatively small number of businesses in the county employing over 10 people.

The study highlighted three main elements of particular importance concerning HHW:

- its status and role as a social enterprise
- the community involvement and control of what takes place in the wood
- its present delivery of education and vocational training to young people.

The work being carried out at HHW while appearing to be unique as a whole package within England is relevant to a range of current national and regional issues. Policies focusing on education, health, youth justice, rural development social enterprise as well as direct woodland and countryside management are relevant to the work being carried out at HHW. Table 1 summarises the social, environmental and economic benefits being generated by the work at HHW.

Conclusions

The objectives of the HHW project, which is to run a self-sustaining woodland social enterprise, are being met and what has been achieved has exceeded the expectations of those involved in the work. The HHW enterprise highlights different ways in which woodlands can contribute to communities and disadvantaged young people creating links between urban and rural areas. It is in this context that HHW offers a way ahead for environmentally sustainable rural businesses. The sustainability of the project is dependent on it generating a diverse range of income, the ability to meet new challenges and also to meet the specific, often complex, requirements outlined by the statutory agencies that have contracts with the enterprise. HHW has demonstrated its ability to do this as it has grown in both numbers of the employees, clients and in the range of its on site facilities and infrastructure. The HHW model is about people, being creative, achieving objectives through collective action and self-sustainability. The work being done is also enabling some statutory agencies to meet their objectives of helping young people to gain training and eventual employment. What HHW does is approach woodlands in a different way not only as a habitat to be managed but a way of using the woodland space to achieve other goals such as employment, education and training.

Table 1: Summary of social, environmental and economic benefits provided by HHW

Social benefits	Environmental benefits	Economic benefits
Social capital (see page 9) – this has been generated between HHW and people in the surrounding communities, as well as the young trainees.	Conservation management of HHW.	Jobs - with fourteen employees HHW is a significant business in a rural county.
Possibilities for reducing anti-social behaviour and crime as the young trainees (often from difficult backgrounds) take pride in what they do and gain vocational skills that can help them to find jobs.	Conservation management of other woodlands through contracts with other organisations e.g. Forestry Commission.	HHW is a social enterprise that is self-sustaining by generating a diverse range of income.
Reducing safety worries for those who may be concerned about visiting woodlands alone – because people live on the site.	Raising awareness about the environment.	Human capital – through the education and training provided.
Social inclusion is relevant in that the mix of those who use the site are from a range of backgrounds and include the young excluded trainees often from disadvantaged urban areas and the local people in the surrounding rural villages who visit the site.	Opportunities for increasing biodiversity through activities such as coppicing.	Investors in People status – motivating and encouraging staff development.
Health and well-being – for members of the surrounding communities and the young people who visit and train on site.	Raising awareness of recycling issues.	Contributing to the knowledge driven economy through the provision of training.
Community involvement through the HHW Board and Executive and for those who become members of HHW Ltd or Friends of HHW.	Reducing invasive species.	Infrastructure including buildings and workshops providing possible opportunities for further income generation.

Key Lessons

- HHW has taken a holistic approach to its work which focuses on people and communities, management of the environment and the creation of a sustainable business.
- HHW provides a model of a social woodland enterprise. Elements of the project could be encouraged and enabled to take place in other areas as part of the drive for rural development and diversification.
- HHW has become increasingly well known at both a regional and national level due to effective networking, partnership working as well as word of mouth. There is a growing awareness amongst environmental and educational professionals that this type of project crosses a range of government policy areas. While this is beneficial in terms of the public benefits provided, it is difficult for a small enterprise such as HHW to deal with the wide range of organisations and government departments that cover these issues (health, education, environment, youth crime etc.). One-stop shops that provide advice, guidance and information for social enterprises could assist in this situation.
- The role of social enterprises in rural development and rural diversification is becoming an issue of increasing interest. The government sees social enterprises as a way of providing public goods. What is not clear is how these organisations can or should be helped and supported in this provision.
- Because HHW is a lived in and worked in woodland it attracts people to the site who may otherwise be concerned with accessing woodlands alone, such as women.
- Woodland organisations and woodland social enterprises can play an important role in rural development. Forestry's contribution to the rural economy has been shown to be significant if, for example, tourism, recreation and house prices are taken into consideration.

- Current planning policy acts as a barrier to organisations such as HHW that want to create a lived in and worked in wood. This is due to strict restrictions on the construction of dwellings and a lack of definition over which activities are considered ancillary to forestry; and which therefore require no planning permission. Through persistence, determination and building relationships with local planners HHW have been able to change attitudes and construct a variety of buildings on site.
- Benefits can be gained for a social enterprise such as HHW by involving the local community in decision-making processes. A commitment by the community and staff of the business to the objectives of the enterprise can provide the momentum for success and are key assets in delivering benefits.
- Many respondents felt that HHW contributed to wider issues such as social inclusion, helping disadvantaged young people, building community capacity and undertaking sustainable management of the environment
- While the type of education and training being carried out at HHW may work in other settings, the woodland habitat has a number of advantages:
 1. Ability to absorb activity without seeming crowded
 2. Calming and therapeutic effects of trees and woodlands on the young people being trained some of whom have emotional and behavioural difficulties or special needs
 3. Providing opportunities for a variety of different training activities such as coppicing, charcoal manufacture and making wood products as well as recreational activities.

Recommendations

Recommendations and further questions for consideration are outlined providing potential ways for the Forestry Commission to build on the lessons learnt from HHW. Many of these recommendations will require a partnership approach and suggestions for this are outlined in the concluding chapter.

- Successful examples of woodland social enterprises such as HHW should be promoted to enable and encourage others to learn and benefit from existing experience and expertise.
- Specific funds could be targeted to help support new or existing successful self-sustaining woodland ventures such as HHW that provide a range of public benefits.
- Greater community control could be enabled in some areas where there are particularly keen groups or individuals who would like greater input and who are committed to providing benefits to the wider community.
- Monitor and evaluate the impact of woodland and environmental vocational training on young people who are excluded or at risk. Are there specific benefits for learning in this type of habitat and therefore a wider role for woodlands and natural spaces in helping these particular groups?
- Explore opportunities for creating capacity among social entrepreneurs to encourage the creation of new innovative and entrepreneurial projects.
- Monitor and evaluate the environmental impacts of the HHW work on the woodland particularly in terms of biodiversity and the sustainable management of semi-natural woodland.
- Areas for further research:
 1. Explore ways of facilitating social learning between agencies, entrepreneurs and communities that can lead to the exposure of new ideas and exchanges of information possibly enhancing future opportunities for innovation.
 2. Develop a better understanding of how particular groups such as lone women, who are concerned about personal safety, can be encouraged to make better use of woodlands and the countryside.
 3. Investigate how woodland environments help facilitate learning not only for individuals with special needs but on a more general basis for all ages and abilities.

1. Introduction

This report focuses on Hill Holt Wood (HHW) situated on the Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire border. The report provides an exploration and description of what has happened in the woodland since its present owners bought it in 1995. This piece of work takes place at an interesting time for forestry in England and within the UK. Against a background of devolved forest policy there is a changing conception of forests. This is characterised by issues such as: a move away from a predominant focus on economic issues to quality of life concerns, a demand for greater public participation, changing societal values and calls for justice and equity in decision-making (O'Brien, 2004). Woodlands and forests are increasingly associated with a wide range of benefits such as health and well-being, education and learning, rural development and urban regeneration.

Lincolnshire is a rural county with undulating countryside and flat areas especially around the Fens and the Wash in the south. The middle of the county is primarily farmland, it has little heavy industry and what does exist is located in the north of the county in and around Scunthorpe and Grimsby. Lincolnshire is a somewhat isolated county although the A46, which has recently been made into a dual carriageway, has improved access on the road network into and out of Lincoln. The wood is situated on the A46 approximately 4km from the A1. HHW is in the ward of Brant Broughton which has a population of 2,483 and is within the parish of Norton Disney (National Statistics Online, 2004). Lincolnshire has just over 3 per cent woodland cover with broadleaves dominating (Forestry Commission, 2001).

The work being carried out at HHW, which is currently focused on the vocational training of young people, while appearing to be unique as a whole package within England is relevant to a range of current national and regional issues. Policies focusing on education, health, youth justice, social enterprise as well as direct woodland and countryside management are relevant to the work being carried out at HHW. The Government is increasingly focused on issues of prevention: for example preventing ill health rather than treating illness once it has occurred, preventing crime rather than punishing offenders. In terms of education there are programmes that are available for young people, who have been excluded from mainstream education, although increasingly the debate is concerned with how to prevent exclusions occurring in the first place. It is in this context that HHW seems to offer a way ahead for woodland management and environmentally sustainable rural businesses.

Interestingly, initial reactions from organisations and individuals to what is going on at HHW fell into three main categories:

- *Enthusiasm* - very enthusiastic about what is going on and the effect the enterprise is having particularly on the young people involved in vocational training at the site.
- *Scepticism* - somewhat sceptical (although it seems a good idea) about whether this could happen anywhere else in the country without the key people who developed the enterprise and got it off the ground in the first place.
- *Bewilderment* - a sense of bewilderment: is this forestry, a community woodland or a training site and how is it financed?

2. Methodology

The research questions addressed for this piece of work included:

- How has the work at HHW developed since 1995 into a community run woodland based on sustainable principles?
- How effective is the enterprise in meeting its aims and objectives?
- What are the public benefits that are being derived from the range of activities taking place at HHW, to whom do they accrue and what is their impact on individuals?
- What lessons can be learnt from Hill Holt that might be applicable to other community woodlands or woodland management in general and might this provide pointers for future policy development within the Forestry Commission?

A qualitative methodology was used to explore the research questions outlined above. This is primarily a case study of a social enterprise and community woodland providing details of how it works in order to explore whether lessons can be learnt for wider application. Qualitative approaches allow the researcher to explore what, for example, a project or event means to the individuals or groups involved. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken; visits were made to the wood and meetings, and an event in the wood was attended. A literature search was also undertaken in order to get an update on relevant policy and research. Interviews were undertaken with representatives of various organisations and individuals in Lincolnshire including:

- Learning and Skills Council
- Connexions
- Education and Cultural Services Directorate, Lincolnshire County Council
- Forest Enterprise and Forestry Commission
- Duke of Edinburgh Award Staff
- Members of Hill Holt Wood Staff
- Members of Hill Holt Wood Board and Executive Committee
- An Executive meeting and Board meeting were attended to observe how these functioned and the issues discussed. A Duke of Edinburgh Award 'Have a go day' was attended to observe an event taking place within the wood.

Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed for later analysis. A journal was kept of observations and notes made at meetings and events.

3. Background and wider context

Since 1995 when Hill Holt Wood was purchased by Nigel (Director) and Karen Lowthrop (Operations Manager and Company Secretary) there has been a significant change in forestry towards sustainable forest management based on Brundtland's concept of sustainable development (WCED, 1987). The England Forestry Strategy (Forestry Commission, 1999) has four main areas of focus:

- Rural development
- Economic regeneration
- Recreation, access and tourism
- Environment and conservation.

The strategy emphasises the wide role that woodlands can play in a variety of locations, through the involvement of people, improving landscapes, generating direct and indirect employment and improving biodiversity and conservation. It is these wider benefits of trees and woodlands that appear to be increasingly important to society. Rural development (one of the main themes of the strategy) is a difficult concept to define due to the contested nature of what constitutes rurality and the difficulty of defining development. Slee (2003) argues that development is both economic (i.e. jobs and outputs) but it also has social and cultural components leading to enhancement of well-being. This is a broader view of rural development and is important in the current drive for rural diversification and sustainable management of the environment.

Issues of particular interest concerning the HHW project cover a variety of topics which relate to the type of work that is being carried out and the wider benefits that may accrue to different groups and individuals as a result of this. These are outlined below and have relevance in varying degrees to the work being carried out at HHW.

3.1 Social and human capital

Social capital refers to the norms, networks and values that facilitate collective action, it differs from human capital in that it is a public good i.e. its effects are shared rather than owned by individuals. Social capital can contribute to both economic and social development. Contemporary social capital theory identifies two forms of capital: structural social capital which involves decision-making, social networks, information sharing and collective action and cognitive social capital which refers to values, trust, shared norms, attitudes and beliefs (Grootaert and Bastelaer, 2001). Trust, which is viewed as a vital component of social capital, often requires years of meetings and interactions between people in order to develop. Social capital can be accumulated and requires investment; this may be in terms of people's effort and time and possibly funding. Further concepts in social capital include what are termed bonding and bridging linkages. Bonding social capital is concerned with the links between people that facilitate intra-group interaction and collective action, while bridging social capital is concerned with the wider relationships that strengthen linkages between groups and other actors and organisations. Human capital focuses on the individual and is often measured through qualifications and training that a person has obtained or undertaken. Both of these concepts are relevant to HHW, human capital is increased through the training that the young people gain at the site. Social capital has been generated through the links the owners have made with members of the surrounding communities some of whom have joined HHW Ltd and now have a direct input into decisions concerning the business. The Director of HHW has also made more extensive links at both regional and national level and can use some of these contacts and links to leverage further support, information or advice for the business.

3.2 Social enterprise and social entrepreneurship

The Department for Trade and Industry (DTI, 2004) describes social enterprises '*as businesses with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and*

owners'. The government argues that they can have an important role to play in creating a sustainable and socially inclusive economy through the use of business solutions to achieve public good. What the above DTI definition does not mention or make explicit which Boschee and McClurg (2004) would argue is of importance, is the issue of earned income. In their paper on social entrepreneurship, Boschee and McClurg (2004) debate the significance of this concept and argue that *'Unless a nonprofit organisation is generating earned revenue from its activities, it is not acting in an entrepreneurial manner. It may be doing good and wonderful things, creating new and vibrant programmes: but it is innovating, not entrepreneurial'*. The New Economics Foundation (2004) defines social enterprises as *'organisations that achieve social or environmental aims primarily by trading'*. The East Midlands Development Agency (EMDA) is the key organisation in the region charged with promoting economic competitiveness. Social Enterprise East Midlands (SEEM, 2004) funded by EMDA is a partnership of community, voluntary, government and regional development sectors in the East Midlands whose role is to enable social enterprises to contribute to local economic renewal and regeneration and to a more equitable regional economy. SEEM have set up a development fund to support social enterprises in their early years or for those that are moving into new markets. Organisations can apply for funding as an established social enterprise; this is defined as an enterprise that earns 50% or more of their income through trading activities. Aspirational social enterprises (these fall within the up to 50% earned income strategy) can also apply (SEEM, 2004). Under this classification HHW would be defined as an established social enterprise, they are also being used as a case study on the Social Enterprise Coalition website (2004).

There needs to be a better understanding of the characteristics that distinguish social enterprises from other small and medium enterprises. The Bank of England report (Brown and Murphy, 2003) on 'The Financing of Social Enterprises' outlines how the social output from an enterprise *'may constitute a positive externality which benefits more people than just the owners, clients or employees of the enterprise. The issue is how the cost of those externalities is met and by whom.'* The report goes on to suggest that in some cases these costs may be partly met by the enterprise itself or they may need to be covered by those outside the enterprise who have an interest in its outputs and outcomes.

3.3 Education and learning

A recent report for the Forestry Commission by the New Economics Foundation (Murray, 2003) evaluated the impacts that Forest School can have on young people. The Forest School concept was developed in Scandinavia and has been adopted and adapted in Britain. The main ethos is that Forest School is for all ages, it is about learning a range of subjects, not only environmental subjects, in a woodland setting on a regular basis. The nef (Murray, 2003) report outlines how Forest School can improve a young person's self-esteem and self-confidence as well as encouraging ownership and pride in the local environment. It can also increase skills and knowledge and counter a lack of motivation and negative attitudes towards learning. In the education sector the recent Interim report of the working group into 14-19 reform chaired by Tomlinson has been welcomed by agencies such as the Learning and Skills Council (LSC, 2004a). The report advocates a substantial boost for vocational qualifications. It also outlines the importance of having vocational options at a pre-16 level. This is of particular importance for HHW as the work being done there is primarily focused on vocational training for 14-18 year olds.

3.4 Community Woodland

Definitions of community woodlands vary. They range from areas of woodland catering for a variety of users which involve people in design, development and custodianship, through to woodlands owned or managed by a group of which a significant proportion of the local population are members; the majority of whom have been democratically elected (MacIntyre and Marshall, 2003). Community engagement and involvement is a key element in whatever type of community woodland is created. In England there are twelve Community Forests whose aim is to deliver urban, economic and social regeneration by creating quality environments. The benefits of community woodland can be wide

ranging and may include economic development, social inclusion, education, employment and environmental improvements (MacIntyre and Marshall, 2003). For the Director of HHW a community woodland is one where the community either own the wood or control it. At present the community does not own HHW but control of the enterprise occurs through the Board and Executive of HHW Ltd, which is made up of people from the communities surrounding the woodland.

3.5 Health and well-being

The health and well-being benefits of trees, woodlands and natural spaces are becoming increasingly well documented and the government is currently very interested in public health issues (Tabbush and O'Brien, 2003). The benefits often focus on two main areas.

- 1) *Emotional and psychological well-being.* Studies suggest that contact with nature may help to reduce anger, aggression and commuter stress. There is evidence from research in America of nature acting as a restorative environment and having a particular impact on children with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). ADD can affect children in a range of ways from poor academic performance through to displaying anti-social and aggressive behaviour. Medication such as 'Ritalin' can help children sustain attention but can also have side affects. Faber Taylor *et al* (2001) in their study of children with ADD found that the benefits children gained from using green space, such as increased attention, occurred not only during the time the children spent playing in green settings but lasted afterwards in a way that did not occur when they played indoors. They concluded by suggesting that there was a role for using natural environments as a potential source of support for children with ADD.
- 2) *Physical activity.* Using facilities such as woodlands on a regular basis as part of an exercise regime or by working and training in them can help to build and maintain healthy bones, muscles and joints, reduce blood pressure, reduce incidences of some types of cancer and prevent obesity (US Department of Health and Human Services, 1996). There is currently a major shift occurring in health in Britain from a focus on treating illness to preventing ill health; and being physically active is a key element of this shift. In March (2004a) 'Choosing Health? A consultation on action to improve people's health' was published by the Department of Health. This outlined the significant rise in interest in improving people's health and well-being. In May (2004b) 'Choosing Health? Choosing Activity: A consultation on how to increase physical activity' was produced as an important strand of the first publication. The Game Plan is the government's strategy for delivering sport and physical activity objectives: there is a target of getting 70 per cent of the population to be physically active by 2020. The Game Plan will bring together information from the governments Activity Co-ordination Team and Sport England's framework for sport in England. The Chief Medical Officer for England also recently published 'At least five a week' which promotes the idea of carrying out at least 30 minutes of exercise on at least five days a week (2004c).

Organisations such as the Forestry Commission can play a key role in enabling people to achieve better health. Two projects run by the Forestry Commission are of particular interest. The first was a pilot project in the West Midlands in 2003/04 where the Forestry Commission linked its Woodland Improvement Grant to health outcomes. Woodland owners were able to apply for grants if they encouraged health-related recreation linked to, for example, a 'Walking for Health' group. This project is currently being evaluated. The second project is a fifteen-month health pilot in Chopwell Wood near Gateshead, managed by the Forestry Commission, starting in May 2004 to explore the range of health and well-being benefits that can be delivered on the Forestry Commission's estate. This is a partnership project involving the Forestry Commission, the Friends of Chopwell Wood, Gateshead Primary Care Trust and Derwentside Primary Care Trust. The two main elements of the project include 1) a general practitioner woodland based activity referral scheme and 2) a programme of school visits in support of County Durham and Derwentside Healthy Schools Standard.

3.6 Crime and anti-social behaviour

Forest Research is organising a seminar in June 2004 in order to raise debate about the accessibility of woodlands and natural spaces with a particular focus on addressing crime and safety issues. There are opportunities for crime reduction and rehabilitation of offenders through education and training which involves woodlands and natural spaces. Of relevance to the HHW situation is the possible rehabilitation, through the vocational training available at the wood, of young people who have become involved in drug use, anti-social behaviour or criminal activity. Research has identified specific factors that increase the risk of young people offending including a lack of training and employment, drug and alcohol misuse, cognitive and behaviour disorders, low income, poor housing, poor parenting and family conflict (DfES, 2001).

Also of relevance in this section is research by Burgess (1995) that outlined public's, particularly lone women's, worries and fears about using woods and natural spaces. People's perceptions of their own safety have real impacts on how and where they use these spaces. Specific issues that influence perceptions may include childhood experiences and media accounts of crime and anti-social behaviour. The fact that people live and work in HHW can have a positive effect reducing the worries and fears of particular groups who feel vulnerable, it also adds in a practical sense to site security.

3.7 Forestry and planning

Ferguson (2004) describes how forestry is not well defined in planning policy. 'Planning Policy Guidance 7: Countryside', which has recently been revised, sets out the government's policy on sustainable development in the countryside. In planning law land has a main use, such as forestry, and it can also have associated ancillary uses which do not require planning permission. There is currently no list of which ancillary (to forestry) activities are acceptable and this means that applications are assessed on a case by case basis. For example charcoal burning might be considered as an ancillary activity by one planning authority or as an industrial activity by another: the latter would require planning permission. The activities taking place at HHW have been accepted as ancillary to forestry and because of this buildings (offices, workshops etc.) can be erected without planning permission but with advance notice given to the planning authority of the organisation's intentions. Gaining planning permission to construct a residential dwelling in a forest is also notoriously difficult as strict tests are applied in terms of business viability and functional need. Planning permission has recently been received at HHW for the construction of an eco house in which the owners will live. Some local planning authorities such as North Kesteven are unusual as they argue that rural diversification policies should allow for this possibility in appropriate circumstances. This raises the question of how to help small local woodland businesses, as Ferguson (2004) argues *'Where better to locate small woodland-based businesses than in the woodlands themselves? And what better materials to build them from than those readily available in those same woods?'*

4. An overview of Hill Holt Wood

Hill Holt Wood, which is a 14 hectare woodland, was purchased by the Lowthrops in January 1995. They had been searching for two years to find a suitable woodland to buy. The previous owners of the site were a timber company who had extracted the best timber from the site and had not replanted. Therefore the site was not viewed as a particularly promising purchase. For a year the owners tried to run the wood from their home in Matlock before deciding to sell their house, move into a caravan in the wood and apply for planning permission to live in the wood. The initial focus for the new owners is outlined in this quote:

...the original intention was that we would somehow or other get planning permission to live in the wood and we would develop enough income for the family and maybe one or two members of staff. That was the target and we would compensate for a low income by reducing our living costs... we were arguing that the reason that it would work was that it was about quality of life, that we would end up as a family with a better quality of life. (Director)

Local people were encouraged to participate from the beginning with the Director writing articles and providing information in local parish newsletters and inviting people to visit and use the site. Initial responses when the owners went knocking on their immediate neighbour's doors (within a mile radius) to generate interest and involvement were one of suspicion partly because they lived in a caravan in the woodland. They were able to overcome this suspicion and a committee was formed in 1997 to link the woodland owners and the community. The committee drew up rules of access: the site is open to the public from 8am to one hour before dark, dogs have to be on leads, no picking of flowers is allowed, and children under 14 should be accompanied by an adult. More recently on 1st June 2002 Hill Holt Wood Ltd was established as a not for profit community controlled membership organisation. HHW's main area of current work is in providing vocational training for young people on various government schemes such as Solutions 4 and Entry to Employment.

As work and training developed at HHW straw bale offices were constructed on site using the skills of staff and the young people involved in the various vocational training schemes. The most recent building (costing approximately £11k) was an Information Technology (IT) centre opened and named after Lady Neville of Aubourn who is the patron of HHW, it also provides an office for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. Planning permission has recently been received for the construction of an eco-house that will be low cost and energy efficient and will allow the owners to vacate their caravan. It is unusual to get planning permission to build a house in a woodland as strict tests are applied in terms of business viability and functional need.

Everyone from land agents to North Kesteven District Council said you will not get planning permission in that woodland. And Nigel said it will happen for all the right reasons. I understand why there has to be rigorous controls but I think people realised in year five when we were still in the caravan with no mains water or electricity that we meant business and were in it for the long haul. (Operations Manager)



IT centre at Hill Holt Wood

While the ideas and activities taking place in the woodland are now becoming more widely known and accepted when they were originally aired there was a lot of scepticism and bewilderment about what the owners were trying to achieve. Organisations and individuals often thought the main reason the woodland had been bought was that the occupants wanted to get planning permission to live in the wood, and that if they received permission they would then close it to public access.

HHW attracts a variety of different groups to the site such as family groups, retired people and women and this is alongside the young people often from the more deprived estates of Lincoln and further afield who come to be trained. Currently two of the rangers as well as the owners live on site. According to staff their presence in the woodland enables others, particularly women, who may be wary of visiting woodlands alone to feel more secure. It also provides people with an opportunity to ask questions and learn about the work being undertaken at the site.

The fact there's a family lives in the wood changes their attitudes to it. It's a managed working wood. (Director)

But what's more important is it increases security of the people who visit the site. So the mix of people that visit this site is different to the mix of people that visit an equivalent site that doesn't have somebody living there. (Director)

4.1 Aim, objectives and ethos

The overall aim although this is not explicitly stated in the business plan is to manage the woodland, be self-sustainable and encourage and enable community involvement.

The objectives outlined in the HHW business plan (February, 2004) are:

To run and operate a self-sustaining woodland social enterprise using traditional crafts incorporating modern techniques that benefit and are beneficial to the environment.

The beneficiaries from the objectives fall into two main groups:

- Young people who are excluded from mainstream education, are unemployed or are at risk.
- The local community who can become members of HHW and enjoy public access to the site.

While the above are the beneficiaries specifically stated in the business plan two other groups in particular also benefit from the social enterprise:

- Those employed at HHW.
- Organisations who are meeting some of their objectives through HHW.

From talking to staff and those who are involved with HHW an overall ethos or philosophy becomes apparent, this is based on a holistic sustainable long-term approach that is flexible and adaptable to changes in priorities. The focus is on reduced energy requirements, quality of life and diverse income streams. The HHW business plan outlines that *'conservation is only sustainable if it is economically viable and it can only be financially viable if the local community is committed to and involved in the project'*.

If you solve someone's problems you've got an income. Find a number of problems link them together and that gives the solution. (Director)

4.2 Woodland environment and infrastructure

HHW consists of hazel coppice, oak standards, ash and birch and although it is not registered as a semi-natural ancient woodland the Director believes it to be one because of indicator species such as wood anemone, bugle and bluebells that can be found on the site. There is also a boundary ditch and a bank forming a parish boundary and now a county boundary. In a field adjacent to the woodland is the buried remains of a Roman Villa that was partly excavated in the 1930s; part of the mosaic floor is now in the archaeological museum in Newark. Next to this at the edge of HHW is an opening and this

has been named Roman Villa Clearing, it is an open area set up with a barbecue which can be used when any events or activities are organised in the wood.

Buildings have been constructed on the site and include an office, IT centre, workshops, canteen and earth composting toilets. These buildings are primarily made from timber, straw bale and wattle and daub with lime plaster. Ponds have been created and footpaths, there is a green woodworking area, charcoal manufacture, signage, and a car park. There is also a permaculture garden with polytunnels and pigs. HHW has three mini buses that are used to pick up trainees and bring them to the wood or take them to where training is being undertaken. North Kesteven District Council has accepted the activities undertaken at HHW as forestry or ancillary to forestry and because of this buildings (offices, workshops etc. that are for non residential use) can be erected without planning permission but with advance notice given to the planning authority of the organisations intentions. As mentioned previously planning permission has been approved for an eco-house which will be used as a residence.



Permaculture garden and path through the woodland



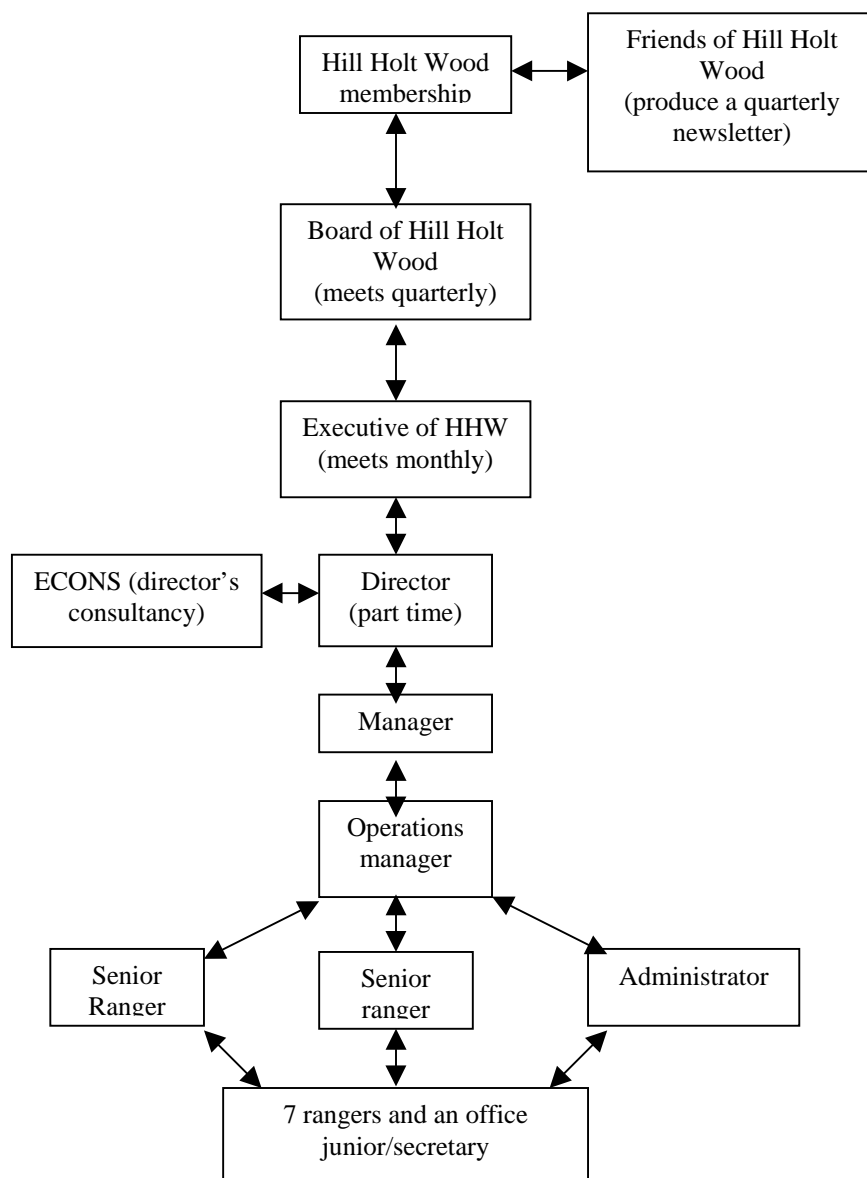
Car park and store shed

5. Social Enterprise and Community Woodland

5.1 Hill Holt Wood Organisational Structure

There are fourteen staff currently employed at HHW including the woodland owners (Figure 1). A project manager, with a background of administration and finance in the RAF, has been appointed temporarily. Funding is currently being sought to finance the post in the longer term. The Director and HHW Board and Executive sees this as an opportunity to prove that HHW can work effectively without the Director being involved on a day to day basis. The Director works part time at HHW and the rest of the time is currently spent trying to set up replica projects. ECONS is the Director's own consultancy, it stands for Economic, Community, Opportunity, Natural and Sustainable. There is a structured salary scale for staff that allows promotion through incremental stages.

Figure 1: HHW structure



The Lincoln Co-op provided funding to pay for a consultant to identify the most appropriate structure for HHW as a not for profit organisation before it was created in 2002. This was when the main business activities were handed over to the community represented by the Board and Executive. People from the parishes surrounding and including HHW are represented on the Board and Executive. Through this they have a direct input into the business decisions and policies of HHW Ltd.

There are twelve members currently on the Board which meets quarterly (Table 2). There is also an Executive, which meets every month consisting of seven people who also sit on the Board. The Director has to take any ideas and decisions to the Executive for discussion in order to gain clearance before proceeding.

...it was the owners business and they decided that it should be a community based organisation, a not for profit organisation with a board of directors. Now that's an enormous step to give the control of a business away which is what they've done. (Board member)

The wider community around the site and further afield can benefit from public access to the site and attend any walks and events that are organised in the wood. It was thought that any village within a five mile radius could join and eleven parishes now have links with the site. The Friends of HHW is a subscription based group with membership categories of: Individual £10, Family £15 and Corporate £35. People can also become members of HHW Ltd; they then have the right to stand for election as a board member and to vote in elections. No membership fee is required although there is a limited liability of £1 per member.

...by involving the community and generating that interest and support you can generate income and that income could be all sorts of things. It could be people paying to park the car and go for a walk, it could be people buying products from the wood, it could be the wood solving community issues such as the young people. The income will be variable depending on the site. (Director)

Table 2: Hill Holt Wood Board and Executive

Occupation of member	Member of Board and/or Executive
Deputy Head of Comprehensive School	Board
Director of Community Fund Foundation	Board
North Kesteven Council	Corporate board member
Housewife and ex State Registered Nurse	Board
Accountant	Board
Magistrate	Board and executive
Retired primary school head	Board and executive and chair of Friends of HHW
Solicitor	Board and executive
Lincoln Co-op manager	Corporate board member
Business man	Board and executive
HHW Staff member	Board
HHW Director	Board and executive
HHW Company Secretary	Board and executive

The Director primarily generates ideas for the business although the Executive and Board who have a wide range of experience can provide suggestions and have their own specific areas of knowledge and networks of contacts within the surrounding area. For the Director the key to the social enterprise is motivating in a different way to a normal profit making business, as the community has a target other than making money. The Board wants the business to make a surplus but in an appropriate way.

This is a social enterprise social objectives are the overriding thing here at HHW, it's not profit. (Board Member)

The chairman of the Board is very anxious that the business is run prudently and argues that if it is not run as a business like venture then it could fail to be self-sustaining. The report 'Enterprise and Social Exclusion' (H M Treasury, 1999) produced at a national level by the Social Exclusion Unit suggested that social enterprises should be recognised as a group of businesses that deserve support and that their differences and similarities to other businesses need to be better understood. A number of key organisations have developed the UK Coalition of Social Enterprises whose role is to support and promote social enterprises; SEEM is on the board of this coalition representing the East Midlands.

5.2 Staff skills and Investors in People status

In talking to staff members at HHW one gains an impression of enthusiasm for the woodland and commitment to the young people who are being trained at the site. The skills of the staff are wide ranging and are outlined in Table 3, which highlights the vocational training opportunities for young people that are available.

Table 3: Vocational training opportunities at HHW

Conservation	Green Woodworking	Vehicle and machinery maintenance
Horticulture	Construction	Countryside Management
Permaculture	Animal care	Landscaping
Blacksmith	Woodland skills	Forestry
Woodwork	Bush craft	Arts and crafts

HHW has achieved Investors in People (IiP) status; this was one of the first things the Operations Manager set up when she started working full time in the woodland in 2000. This was seen as a good way of motivating the staff and adding status to the whole HHW project. The Lowthrops recognise that it can be stressful for staff working with difficult sometimes abusive young people so they want to support staff through meetings, consultations and providing opportunities for training. IiP is not easy to achieve for a relatively small business, the standard is based on four principles: commitment, planning, action and evaluation. Fraser (2003) argues *'for a business to achieve the standard it must show a commitment to identifying and carrying out the training and development needs of all its workers'*. IiP is not solely a training programme it also entails managing a range of human resource issues. Some of the training undertaken by staff is detailed in Table 4.

The thing that's really good about HHW is the training for personal development. (Ranger)

Table 4: Some of the training undertaken by staff at HHW

Food hygiene course	Dealing with staff absences
Willow making	Key skills portfolio building
Health and safety	E2e passport documents
First aid	Drug awareness
Risky behaviour	Paperwork for the pen less
Positive restraint	Equal opportunities

5.3 Income streams at HHW: past and present

At the moment income for HHW is primarily generated by training contracts held with statutory agencies. HHW through its staff and facilities can provide vocational training in a number of areas as well as assistance with basic skills such as numeracy, literacy and IT skills (Table 4). The young people on the various training schemes outlined below sometimes have a history of substance abuse and criminal activity as well as emotional and behavioural difficulties. HHW currently have no young people on the first two schemes mentioned below; they did have until quite recently when the Executive Committee raised concerns regarding the contracts and therefore its provision in this area has ceased. The reputation HHW developed on the first two schemes led them to winning contracts for the latter two programmes Solutions 4 and Entry to Employment. Three people who were trained at the site on the various schemes have gone on to be employed at HHW. These staff members will have direct knowledge and experience of some of the problems and pressures the young trainees face.

Environmental Task Force

Environmental Task Force (ETF) is part of the government New Deal programme for young unemployed people age 18-25. The focus of ETF is on enhancing long term employment prospects through things such as training, and projects and placements that deliver environmental benefits. Young people may not have been able to access employment due to a number of barriers such as a lack of work experience, qualifications, interpersonal skills as well as poor motivation, low self esteem

and a possible history of drug and alcohol problems. The key measures of success for ETF trainees are employment and the delivery of environmental benefits. HHW had a number of ETF recruits and two current members of staff were ETF trainees at HHW before being employed as a ranger and secretary. Originally HHW was sub-contracted to Groundwork Lincolnshire to deliver ETF then later with the Community Council of Lincolnshire. They found being a sub-contractor an unsatisfactory process in practice and wanted to act as a direct provider. Through the ETF scheme HHW first started to make a name for itself in training and helping young people.

Intermediate Labour Market

The Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) was developed to tackle long term employment, the main feature of ILM is the fact that it is paid work on a temporary contract with training and advice on job searching. The main aim is to provide a '*bridge back to the world of work*' (Marshall and Macfarlane, 2000). Employers are more likely to recruit a person if they have been out of work for only a short time or have not worked before rather than take on anyone who has been out of work for a long period of time. One of the ILM recruits has now been employed at HHW as a ranger.

Solutions 4

Solutions 4 (originally named Key Stage 4 Alternative Curriculum) was developed in Lincolnshire by the County Council's Education and Cultural Services Directorate as a response to dealing with 14-16 year olds who were excluded from school. For these young people main stream education has not worked for a variety of reasons and this has led them, through their behaviour or non-attendance, to be excluded from school. The young people may have emotional and behavioural difficulties and will often be classed as Special Educational Needs as they have learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn than other children of their own age. It was thought that a different approach was needed one in which the young people could succeed at something and gain skills and the motivation to go onto further learning or training. HHW were approached by the County Council to take under 16s and provide them with basic skills and vocational training. They currently have 20 young people on Solutions 4 and funding is received from the Council for this provision. Table 5 gives an outline of the young people's profiles which illustrates the difficulties these youngsters can face within mainstream provision.

Table 5: Learner profiles for those on Solutions 4 and Entry to Employment

Learners in care	4
Involved in youth justice	8
Statemented for education/behaviour	6
Basic skills at below entry level	9
Basic skills at entry level	4
Basic Skills at Level 1 (GCSE grade D-U)	2
Learners with special needs such as autism	3

We've got to have a different approach to motivate these young people. We've got to give them another chance.
(Education and Cultural Services Directorate)

The trainee to staff ratio is generally small at 1 staff member to 4 trainees and if needed this can be reduced to 1 to 1 if a young person needs extra help and supervision.

We have three lessons a day 9.30-11.00, 11.15-12.45 and 1.15-2.30. (Ranger)

We're not a school, we try and change the way these kids think and if we can get them qualified in anyway while there here that's all the better. It's about helping people out, it's all about hard work, obeying laws and being a decent citizen. (Ranger)

There is a broad focus, as the quote above suggests, of enabling and encouraging these young people to not only learn new skills but ultimately to go on and lead a useful and hopefully productive life. In

the past, some of the young people would have been placed in provision outside the county; this can be extremely costly e.g. approximately £70k per annum (which would include residential care). By providing a number of opportunities and locations for Solutions 4 within Lincolnshire money can be saved by the Local Education Authority (LEA). There are also possible longer term opportunities for reducing costs to society if these young people gain appropriate skills and eventual employment and are diverted from possible criminal activity.

...it's the flexibility that pays dividends. If we don't get this right a lot of these young people are going to go on and are probably going to be extremely costly to society later on because of the skills they haven't got or let's face it the crime they drift into which is highly likely. (Education and Cultural Services Directorate)

There are currently seventeen sites in Lincolnshire providing vocational education work for the Solutions 4 programme none of which, apart from HHW, are based specifically in woodland. The Director of Education and Cultural Services Directorate would like to see another HHW established in a different part of the county to be able to offer this opportunity to other young people.



Young person on Solutions 4 programme

Connexions Service

This service has been introduced to provide integrated advice, information, support and guidance as well as personal development opportunities for 13–19 year olds and has been rolled out across England since 2001. This is a government initiative part of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). Connexions personal advisors work closely with LEAs, Learning and Skills Council, young people and training providers such as HHW to ensure that young people get the support and training they need to progress and gain qualifications before entering employment or further training or education. Connexions, within Lincolnshire, decided to specialise and one of the areas it has done this is with Solutions 4 under Emotional Behaviour Support Services within the Council. Connexions also work with youth justice services to help provide opportunities for young people who have offended or are at risk of offending. The Connexions advisor describes below some of the ways in which HHW makes a difference to the young people on Solutions 4.

I've placed young people with attention deficit disorder and syndromes somewhere on the autistic spectrum and HHW works really really well with these young people. It's the open environment, how they move the tasks so the attention span can be managed really well in the open spaces. There is an in built ethos around progression' (Connexions)

...they're very good at setting a young person onto a task that produces something in their hand very quickly, it might be producing a wooden spoon and that raises self-esteem. (Connexions)

Entry to employment (e2e)

This is a scheme funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC, 2004b) a new organisation responsible for the planning and funding of all post 16 education and training (not including Higher Education). LSC, funded by DfES, brought together the skills of the Training and Enterprise Councils and the Further Education Funding Council to meet the government's aims set out in the 'Learning to succeed' White Paper (DfEE, 1999). Jones *et al* (2004) suggest that the '*five East Midlands LSCs are part of the drive to secure effective economic development in the region by harnessing the benefits of a knowledge driven economy*'. E2e is a programme for 16-18 year olds that started in August 2003. It is designed to enable progression for a candidate to one of three outcomes: 1) employment, 2) employment with training or 3) college and further learning. The three strands of the programme are key skills, personal and social development, and vocational training. HHW is a vocational site for e2e and were approached by the LSC to take young people. LSCs operate to national guidelines although there is some discretion for each region to target its work as it thinks is appropriate. Initially HHW were not seen as a direct provider by the LSC, it was thought that they would be sub-contracted to deliver e2e by a bigger organisation. However HHW had experience of this type of approach with the ETF and ILM programme and were not keen to proceed on this basis. They were therefore determined to become a direct provider and have become one, but only after following a rigorous process that the LSC admitted was very bureaucratic for small providers. LSC recognise that HHW set themselves high standards in the work they do with young people.

For delivery of the e2e programme it is not stipulated what qualifications staff need. LSC suggest providers need to deliver vocational development, they should also have an understanding of career guidance and the materials to deliver job hunting. Providers, such as HHW, also need someone who is qualified as a basic skills tutor and the Operations Manager has completed training in this area. The e2e trainees come not only from Lincoln but also from further afield including Grantham, Gainsborough, Market Rasen, Doncaster and Worksop. There are currently 24 young people in attendance at HHW. E2e is not like a college programme that starts in September the young people are referred when needed; so it is a rolling programme and the length of time the young person spends on the programme depends on the needs of the individual. As a provider HHW are required to find work placements for the young people on e2e. LSC acknowledge that it is not easy for a small niche provider to do this however they did argue that HHW were good at finding placements because of the contacts and networks of both staff, Board and Executive members. The Operations Manager suggested that they did have some trouble getting young people into placements and wanted to try and address this by encouraging corporate members of HHW Ltd to support the enterprise by taking trainees. The Director has recently been 'twinned' with a senior manager from a large local building company (Simons Construction) which may help to provide work placement opportunities. Two trainees have recently been able to get placements with a timber company. LSC admitted to expecting a lot in terms of the range and experience of staff for small providers. In less rural and sparse counties, than Lincolnshire, larger providers of e2e are generally the norm.

Education and training overview

One of the specific things HHW provides is mentoring to the young people once they have left a scheme and moved on. It is also proactive in working with parents and carers; again focusing on a holistic approach that looks at barriers to participation and learning.

There is an after care policy, HHW if they have got them enrolled on a college course they maintain a mentor role for a few months. (Learning and Skills Council)

The HHW staff would actually mentor the young people and that is absolutely brilliant because of the skills they have and because that young person has come through HHW and because they know their behaviours and what works for them and that seems to prevent drop out. (Connexions)

In providing both Solutions 4 and e2e HHW work with a number of agencies such as youth offending team workers, social workers and Connexions advisors. At the moment HHW have only young men on both programmes and these young people may have various problems such as aggressive behaviour and very difficult home lives. It is thought that the woodland environment is beneficial in this respect.

A lot of learners who have aggressive behaviour will calm down at HHW because it's a calm environment. (Learning and Skills Council)

The wood is tranquil for them, some have never had the opportunity to have a bit of quiet space. (Operations Manager)

HHW believe that carrying out both Solutions 4 and e2e on site will allow them to have a seamless transition for young people who want to progress from one programme to the other. There are also possibilities in the future that they may deliver some of the other LSC programmes such as Foundation Modern Apprenticeships for 18-25 year olds. For the young people on Solutions 4 knowing that there may be an option of carrying on from one programme to another is very useful.

I have found that it is such a settler for young people [on Solutions 4 knowing about e2e at HHW] because their energies don't have to go into the worry and anxiety; they know they can choose it as an option, maybe at HHW. (Connexions)

From interviews with personnel from the Education and Cultural Services Directorate, LSC and Connexions a number of key issues arose surrounding the impact HHW has as a provider on the young people who are trained there. As mentioned these young people often have difficult backgrounds and special needs. A holistic approach in which there is respect for the woodland, the young people and the public were viewed as significant, as well as a focus on helping them to progress in their own time. Attendance is high for both Solutions 4 and e2e young people at HHW. There is a strong work ethic there and the young people are expected to attend five days a week, HHW is one of the few providers to enforce this.

As well as training the young people are able to plant their own tree at the site and even if the present owners leave these young people can always come back to HHW because it is a community woodland.

We want the whole woodland experience and whole community feel to make an impact on their lives and maybe to change the way they view things. (Operations Manager)

Staff, Board and Executive members see the work carried out at HHW as not only providing training and qualifications for young people but more broadly about enabling them to become useful members of society. The staff play a significant role and their enthusiasm is translated to the trainees but it can also be stressful work as well as being rewarding.

I love working here, living here, working with the kids. It helps me in the way I do my job as I really do enjoy being here and it probably benefits the kids. (Ranger)

You have to be quite resilient and you have to deal with stress and deal with other people's stress. It's very challenging but when you get the outcomes, the kids going to college, the kids coming back to volunteer or to ask questions or say thanks; that's what makes your job. (Ranger)



Green woodworking area within the wood

Duke of Edinburgh Award Access Centre (DoE Award)

The DoE Award Scheme was looking for new office space for a staff member. They had used HHW as a training venue in the past and persuaded them to become an access centre for the scheme. This now means that any young person can come to HHW to carry out parts of the DoE Award. The County Council pays rent to HHW for office space for a staff member to be based there.

An event was held on the 20th March 2004 at the wood to demonstrate some of the activities the Award offers and act as a taster day for young people. Two of the HHW staff are trained to deliver DoE Awards. This on site provision also provides an opportunity for the young people on Solutions 4 and e2e to gain extra certificates. Some of the young people who train at HHW came along to the 'Have a go day' to help out and carry out demonstrations for those who attended. One young man on the Solutions 4 programme (who was carrying out demonstrations in the Green Woodworking area for the day) told me how he had been coming to HHW for two years. He stated that he was dyslexic and had trouble reading and writing but was carrying out basic skills work as well as vocational training at HHW. His friends thought it was very unusual that he was working in a woodland. This young man clearly enjoyed showing others some of the skills he had learnt and demonstrated confidence and a sense of pride in his work.

Grants and Awards

HHW have been able to secure a number of small grants and awards including:

- *Woodland Grant Scheme.* Payment was received from the Forestry Commission of £5,700 for improvements to be made to paths, to tackle invasive rhododendron growth, as well as a small annual fee for management over 5 years.
- *Awards for All and Local Network Fund.* Awards for All is a lottery grants programme aimed at local communities and the Local Network Fund is a government grant for groups working with young people from 0-19 years. The Awards for All and Local Network Fund grants (totalling £12k) were used for development of the IT centre at HHW.

The HHW business plan (2004) states very clearly that grant funding is only sought for the acquisition of capital projects or items as a base to generate further income. Since 1996 approximately £21k has been received from grants emphasising HHWs ability to finance itself through trading. This works out at approximately 10% of the income (see financial status below) gained for the financial year 2003/2004. Self sustainability is the key ethos for HHW Ltd. Recent applications have been made to SEEM which is funded by the East Midlands Development Agency and another application to Job Centre Plus. The SEEM application was unsuccessful but there are opportunities for HHW to reapply in the future.

Work for the Forestry Commission

HHW are carrying out work at Chambers Wood, situated to the south-east of Lincoln, managed by the Forestry Commission. This has involved conservation work based on ride widening. A small contract was set up; HHW bought the standing oak for a minimal cost and are carrying out the work as a vocational training exercise. While they have been slow to make progress with this piece of work and have gone over the specified contract time, the work that has been done is of good quality.

...they are doing a very good job, a very tidy job but it doesn't pay. Obviously the timber they are getting out of there in no way will pay for the amount of man hours put in. (Forestry Commission)

The above quote highlights how the work HHW are doing at the site would not pay in conventional woodland management terms but if approached from a different perspective where income is being earned as part of the social enterprise for training young people; then it can be financially viable. Not only are HHW developing partnerships with other organisations such as the Forestry Commission, they are training the young people, producing conservation benefits at Chambers Wood; and the

timber extracted will be stored at HHW and may be used for future furniture production or construction. HHW believe they can add value and turn the timber into something other than firewood.

5.4 Financial status

From the profit and loss accounts for HHW Ltd (for the financial year 2003/2004 - distributed at the board meeting in March) at January 2004 there was an income of £208K with a net profit of £40k. This equates to month eight for HHW Ltd as the financial year for the company runs from 1st June to 31st May. The end of year estimate is for an income of £320k and £60k surplus. At the Board meeting, because of this surplus, a staff bonus was discussed (staff had received a Christmas bonus) this might work out at something in the region of £500 for a senior ranger. The chair of the Board outlined that HHW Ltd was run as a strong business, that client numbers had increased, income was strong and there was a mix of incomes which the Board favoured as this was thought to be more sustainable than relying on one funding stream.

5.5 Networking and events

The Director organised a two day conference in June 2003 at Lincoln University called 'Towards Sustainable Management of the Countryside' this was sponsored by Lincolnshire Co-op, Environmental Assistance, Forestry Commission and ECONS. The Director of Forestry Commission England gave a presentation and the Director General of Land Use and Rural Affairs for DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) chaired the plenary session at the end of the conference. Unusually for a countryside management conference a group of police officers attended bringing with them a large police information unit. Their presence was due to links established between HHW and local police force because of the noticeable effect that training at HHW has had on some of the young people who were known to the local police because of their behaviour.

Some recent visits and future activities are listed below. These illustrate the range of contacts that have been developed.

- The president of the Country Land and Business Association visited HHW in February 2004.
- Visit by HRH Earl of Wessex on 28th April 2004 as part of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.
- The Director appeared on two BBC television programmes 'Look North' and 'Working Lunch' in April.
- The Royal Forestry Society are planning a visit as part of a conference in May 2004
- There is to be a Permaculture gathering from June 3-6th 2004 incorporating a one day 'Sustainable Woodland' Conference.

The Director speaks at many local, regional and national conferences and has been extremely successful in networking and establishing contacts with a whole range of organisations particularly public and voluntary agencies.



Pond at Hill Holt Wood and public earth toilet

6. Future plans and ideas

The HHW business plan outlines the need to invest in more facilities, provide a wider programme of activities and events and to attract a larger and more varied community to participate in and use these facilities. Below is an outline of some of the current ideas and opportunities for the future.

6.1 Social housing and community ownership

Employees in many parts of the country are having difficulties earning enough income to buy their own property. HHW sees an opportunity for building five easy and cheap to construct social houses that would be offered for rent to staff. The houses would have rainwater collection systems and earth toilets. It is proposed that part of the rent would go into a trust fund that the employee would get if they left the job (without interest which would go to the community business) or would be part of their pension if they stayed in the job. A planning officer from North Kesteven District Council has been to the site to discuss the possibility of planning permission and according to the Director does not foresee any significant problems with the application. The focus for HHW is to retain staff skills and provide them with an incentive to stay.

Create a job that young people can come into and know they have a job for life, a socially owned version of a country estate that the community controls (Director)

Social housing was Nigel's idea and we would support that totally, it's a great idea. We are conscious that we don't pay enormous amounts of money, partly because we can't. (Board member)

Although HHW is currently owned by the Lowthrops if housing is to be built on site they see the need for ownership to be transferred to the community possibly through some sort of trust. The Board and Executive agree that there needs to be a detailed debate of how this might happen. The houses would then belong to the community rather than to an individual and could never be used for individual profit. The owners currently receive a rent of £5K per year from HHW Ltd for the use of the woodland.

The issue of affordable housing is currently a big concern for the government across the whole of Britain. In Scotland the Forestry Commission and Communities Scotland have recently been asked to explore the scope for releasing some forest land to increase the supply of houses that would be affordable to local people. This would be in areas where the demand for second homes and retirement homes have increased house prices considerably. Social landlords would manage these houses and local timber would be used for their construction (Forestry and British Timber, 2004).

6.2 Replication of the HHW model

Negotiations are well developed with a farmer in Yorkshire and Leeds LEA to set up a similar project focusing on vocational training for young people using a farm as a base. The farmer has buildings that can be used and the aim is to employ rangers who will spend time being trained at HHW before starting the project in Yorkshire in late 2004. From this training the rangers will be able to learn how HHW works with young people and apply that to the farm site. HHW's Director will act as a consultant to the project as it is being set up and also in its first year of operation.

6.3 Eco-burial country parks.

There is an increasing shortage of burial spaces throughout England. HHW are currently talking to 'Churches together in all Lincolnshire' to explore possible opportunities. The Director's idea is that land could be purchased that could become an eco-burial country park which would be open to the public. The park would be a celebration of life and somewhere people could go for enjoyment as well as being a burial site. There are seven people currently buried in HHW, they specifically requested and wanted to be buried at the site and HHW enabled this to happen.

6.4 Gateway to Lincolnshire project

A recent plan to purchase land adjacent to HHW has stalled, as the current owner does not wish to sell. The idea was to develop the tourism and heritage (Roman Villa) potential of the wood as it is close to the A1 and on the A46 which is a main route to resorts such as Skegness. A visitor centre was planned which would also provide opportunities for young people on the e2e programme to learn retail or catering skills. Some of the issues surrounding this purchase were discussed at the Board meeting and it was suggested that another approach should be made to the landowners at some point in the future outlining that the proposal would be for the benefit of the wider community surrounding the site.



Roman Villa clearing on the edge of Hill Holt Wood

6.5 Probation service

Contact has been made with the probation service to discuss the possibility of providing vocational training for offenders. Potentially, according to one Board member, the benefits of this could be important particularly as the statistics concerning re-offending in relation to jobs are, he suggests, significant. He described how the likelihood of re-offending drops if:

- The offender gets into a decent relationship
- If they can get into decent housing
- If their alcohol or drugs habit is addressed.

Although apparently none of the above have as big an impact on re-offending rates as getting a job and thereby giving the young person the opportunity to have a purposeful life. Young people who are excluded from school tend to have difficult backgrounds, poor possibly criminalised parents who do not work and they often live in poor conditions.

The drivers of crime are well known and generally come in a package. (Board member)

I think HHW could play a much more substantial role in the criminal justice system of Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire. (Board member)

6.6 Manufacturing

There may be opportunities in the future to provide woodland manufacturing to local companies and increase retail opportunities through the sale of furniture, other wood products and organic produce. This could be developed if other income streams were reduced.



7. Summary and Conclusions

The aim of this report has been to provide an exploration and description of the work being carried out at HHW. The research questions were concerned with how HHW has developed; whether it is meeting its objectives; what are the public benefits being provided; and what lessons can be learnt from the approach being undertaken at the wood. This study outlined that the three main elements of particular relevance concerning HHW are:

- Its status as a social enterprise
- Its role as a community woodland
- Its delivery of education and training to young people.

This report has described how HHW has developed and grown since 1995 into an environmental social enterprise. It emphasises that what HHW does is approach woodlands in a different way not only as a habitat to be managed but a way of using the woodland space to achieve other goals such as employment, education and training. What is clear from studying HHW is that a holistic approach is taken that takes into consideration the management of the environment, the social benefits that people receive from being involved and using the site, and the economic aspects that enable the enterprise to fund itself.

There is no other setting in a wood that has this holistic approach the setting is unique. (Connexions)

HHW is meeting its aims and objectives and its achievements have exceeded the expectations of those involved in the work. The HHW enterprise shows different ways in which woodlands can contribute to communities and disadvantaged young people creating links between urban and rural areas. There are possible longer-term opportunities for reducing costs to society if the young people being trained gain appropriate skills and eventual employment and are diverted from possible criminal activity. The sustainability of the project is dependent on it generating a diverse range of income, the ability to meet new challenges and also to meet the specific, often complex, requirements outlined by the statutory agencies that have contracts with the enterprise. HHW has demonstrated its ability to do this as it has grown in both numbers of the employees, clients and in the range of its on site facilities and infrastructure.

The HHW model is about people, being creative, achieving objectives through collective action and self-sustainability. The work being done is enabling statutory agencies to meet their objectives of helping young people to gain training and eventual employment. As with any business income is important, although for a social enterprise such as HHW this enables it to deliver the social and environmental objectives that it considers are important. The enterprise also has the long-term aim of gaining a surplus that would cover staff wages and all running costs for one year. Therefore if income failed or was reduced for any reason there would be one year's leeway with which to retain and re-train staff, change direction and try new approaches.

Increasingly woodlands are being associated with a wide range of public benefits as outlined in the three Forestry Commission country forestry strategies. Policies focusing on education, health, youth justice, rural development social enterprise as well as direct woodland and countryside management are relevant to the work being carried out at HHW. The Government is increasingly focused on issues of prevention: for example preventing ill health rather than treating illness once it has occurred, preventing crime rather than punishing offenders. In terms of education there are programmes that are available for young people, who have been excluded from mainstream education, although increasingly the debate is concerned with how to prevent exclusions occurring in the first place. Table 1 (page 5) summarises the social, environmental and economic benefits being generated by the work at HHW.

Key Lessons

There are a number of key lessons highlighted below that have emerged from the research.

- HHW has taken a holistic approach to its work that focuses on people and communities, management of the environment and the creation of a sustainable business.
- HHW provides a model of a social woodland enterprise. Elements of the project could be encouraged and enabled to take place in other areas as part of the drive for rural development and diversification. Commitment, determination as well as long term vision will be important if this is to happen successfully elsewhere.
- HHW has become increasingly well known at both a regional and national level due to effective networking, partnership working as well as word of mouth. There is a growing awareness amongst environmental and educational professionals that this type of project crosses a range of government policy areas. While this is beneficial in terms of the public benefits provided, it is difficult for a small enterprise such as HHW to deal with the wide range of organisations and government departments that cover these issues (health, education, environment, youth crime etc.). One-stop shops that provide advice, guidance and information for social enterprises could assist in this situation.
- The role of social enterprises in rural development and rural diversification is becoming an issue of increasing interest. The government sees social enterprises as a way of providing public goods. What is not clear is how these organisations can or should be helped and supported in this provision.
- Because HHW is a lived in and worked in woodland it attracts people to the site who may otherwise be concerned with accessing woodlands alone, such as women.
- Woodland organisations and woodland social enterprises can play an important role in rural development. Forestry's contribution to the rural economy has been shown to be significant if, for example, tourism, recreation and house prices are taken into consideration.
- Current planning policy acts as a barrier to organisations such as HHW that want to create a lived in and worked in wood. This is due to strict restrictions on the construction of dwellings and a lack of definition over which activities are considered ancillary to forestry (and which therefore require no planning permission). Through persistence, determination and building relationships with local planners HHW have been able to change attitudes and construct a variety of buildings on site.
- Benefits can be gained for a social enterprise such as HHW by involving the local community in decision-making processes. A commitment by the community and staff of the business to the objectives of the enterprise can provide the momentum for success and are key assets in delivering benefits.
- Many respondents felt that HHW contributed to wider issues such as social inclusion, helping disadvantaged young people, building community capacity and undertaking sustainable management of the environment
- While the type of education and training being carried out at HHW may work in other settings, the woodland habitat has a number of advantages:
 1. Ability to absorb activity without seeming crowded
 2. Calming and therapeutic effects of trees and woodlands on the young people being trained some of whom have emotional and behavioural difficulties or special needs
 3. Providing opportunities for a variety of different training activities such as coppicing, charcoal manufacture and making wooden products as well as recreational activities.

From the interviews undertaken for this work the majority of respondents thought that some of what was going on at HHW could be replicated. There was a strong feeling particularly by the agencies focusing on the education and training of young people that this type of approach should happen elsewhere. The respondents involved in education in particular highlighted the calming effect that the woodland has on the young people. Many respondents felt that HHW contributed to wider issues such as social inclusion, helping disadvantaged young people, building community capacity and

undertaking sustainable management of the environment. Respondents identified key elements of success from the HHW project (Table 6).

Table 6: Key elements of success identified by respondents

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE	COMMUNITY WOODLAND	EDUCATION + TRAINING
Vision and values Strong underlying ethos of commitment to the people and woodland. Social and environmental objectives.	Partnership working With the agencies they have contracts with, the community, the young people and their families and carers.	Respect Distinct culture focusing on respect for the woodland, the young people, the animals and the public.
Figure heads Both the Director and Operations Manager bring specific skills to HHW – ideas and motivation.	Sense of ownership For the young people training at the site, the community welcomed to the site and the staff who live and work there.	Achievable tasks Allows young people to gain confidence and can quickly raise self-esteem.
Staff skills Key in any organisation is the ability of staff and their commitment and enthusiasm. They act as role models and mentors for the young trainees.	Woodland environment The calming and therapeutic effects of woodland were seen as very important, for the community in general but particularly for the young people.	Boundaries and rules It is made clear to the young people what is and is not acceptable behaviour.
Organisation and structures To achieve IiP status and win the e2e contract HHW had to put in place good organisational structures.	Knowledge and expertise From individuals from the surrounding communities who sit on the Board and Executive.	Developing skills Skills that will enable the young people to get jobs or to go on to further education and training.
Holistic approach Bringing together all the different strands of what goes on at HHW into something more than the sum of its parts.	People living in the wood Provides a distinct feel to the woodland and many people feel more secure when visiting the site.	Progression Motivating young people to move them towards gaining qualifications and gainful employment.

With the current focus on rural development and rural diversification and the need to create a thriving rural economy social enterprises such as HHW offer a way ahead for environmentally sustainable rural businesses. The question of planning policy in the countryside is of particular relevance to the work taking place at HHW. The organisation has had to work hard in order to get its activities accepted as forestry or ancillary to forestry. Without some more flexibility in the current planning system the goal of creating sustainable small woodland businesses that are similar to HHW will be difficult.

If the work being done at HHW is to be replicated then key issues that make the organisation a success will need to be recognised, these include:

- Community involvement
- Vision, ideas and commitment
- Social enterprise bringing together social, economic and environmental objectives
- Networking, creation of partnerships and selling a message
- Reducing costs
- Diverse income streams.

8. Recommendations

Below recommendations and areas for further research are outlined. These provide potential ways in which the Forestry Commission can build on the lessons learnt from the HHW project. These recommendations primarily involve a partnership approach with a range of other groups or organisations (suggestions are outlined below). Some of these issues relate directly to HHW while others are relevant on a wider scale.

- Successful examples of woodland social enterprises such as HHW should be promoted to enable and encourage others to learn and benefit from existing experience and expertise. Currently there is little understanding of what social enterprises are doing or the challenges they face. These issues are being explored by organisations such as the New Economics Foundation (nef) and the Social Enterprise Coalition. This report illustrates that HHW is an example of good practice for a social enterprise and that it is providing many of the public benefits outlined in the England Forestry Strategy. Promotion could be primarily web based, for example woodland social enterprises could be promoted through the FC website; while SEEM (and other regional equivalents), DTI Social Enterprise Unit, nef and the Social Enterprise Coalition all have a role to play in promoting successful social enterprises of all types. The DTI Social Enterprise Unit outlines that *‘raising awareness and celebrating success and entrepreneurial achievement is important’*.
- Specific funds could be targeted to help support new or existing successful self-sustaining woodland ventures such as HHW that provide a range of public benefits. The regional forestry frameworks being developed in England provide a mandate for developing appropriate regional themes for grants. A Woodland Improvement Grant (WIG) was targeted at health in the West Midlands in 2003/2004 and a new WIG targeted at creating Forest Schools is being developed in East England. A similar targeted scheme could be considered as part of woodland diversification in urban or rural areas in Lincolnshire, for example. Specific criteria would need to be developed concerning what constituted a woodland social enterprise. On a wider basis a number of Regional Development Agencies such as EMDA (through SEEM) are providing funds that social enterprises can bid for, although these will be any type of enterprise not only environmental ones. There is also an important role for the Social Enterprise Coalition in supporting the growth of social enterprises.
- Monitor and evaluate the environmental impacts of the HHW enterprise on the woodland habitat particularly in terms of biodiversity and ecological impact. Part of this work could include an assessment of whether HHW should be classed as a semi-natural ancient woodland. This could be carried out in partnership for example with a university or could form part of a wider funding bid to the Rural Economy and Land Use Programme, or other research programme.
- Greater community control could be enabled in some areas where there are particularly keen groups or individuals who would like greater input and who are committed to providing benefits to the wider community. This could occur on either the Forestry Commission estate or on private land. HHW is still privately owned although the community controls the enterprise through HHW Ltd. The Forestry Commission is already involved in carrying out extensive participation programmes and encouraging community involvement and this could be an extension, in some areas, of current participation. From studying the HHW approach setting up a community controlled woodland requires:
 - a bottom up approach to build trust, develop relationships and generate people’s interest in the opportunities that woodlands provide.
 - key committed individuals who can start the ball rolling and generate enthusiasm.This can in time lead to:
 - people getting involved who become committed to the work and gain a sense of ownership and achievement from their involvement.

- other people then sometimes emerge who can take over, either wholly or partially, from the initial person/people who started the process.
- Monitor and evaluate the impact of woodland and environmental vocational training on young people who are excluded or at risk. Are there specific benefits for learning in this type of habitat and therefore a wider role for woodlands and natural spaces in helping these particular groups? There has been a significant impact for some young people who have been trained at HHW and who have gained employment or enrolled on college courses. It may be, as the quote below suggests, that Local Education Authorities should consider how woodland effects young people with specific problems. The Forestry Commission's role in this could be to work in partnership through the Forest Education Initiative and enable organisations/agencies (e.g. Connexions, Local Education Authorities/schools) to use particular woodland areas in order to work with specific groups. Forest Research could be involved in an evaluation of this type of approach:

‘Should we be saying at re-integration (the panel that decides how an excluded young person is re-integrated back into education) that a woodland environment is the best place for young people with specific disorders? And having said that if a young person has a statement should we be tagging funding to that young person as opposed to waiting for a crisis, so they are placed somewhere like HHW intact?’ (Connexions)

- Explore opportunities for creating capacity among social entrepreneurs to encourage the creation of new innovative and entrepreneurial projects. Through a partnership of organisations (e.g. Forestry Commission, Woodland Trust, Local Authorities) small areas of woodland could be allocated to a woodland social enterprise, such as HHW, to allow them to set up further projects with specific social and environmental objectives (encouraging rural diversification or urban renaissance).
- Areas for further research:
 - Explore ways of facilitating social learning between agencies, entrepreneurs and communities that can lead to exposure of new ideas and exchanges of information possibly enhancing future opportunities for innovation. Successful partnerships between public, private and voluntary organisations and the development of networks and contacts both locally, regionally and nationally is important for community woodlands and allows them access to advice and information.
 - Develop a better understanding of how particular groups such as lone women, who are concerned about personal safety, can be encouraged to make better use of woodlands and the countryside. How much of a difference does a lived-in and worked-in woodland such as HHW make to perceptions of personal security?
 - Investigate how woodlands can help facilitate learning not only for individuals with special needs but on a more general basis for all ages and abilities. The therapeutic effects of woodlands and natural spaces on health and well-being are becoming more well known.

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