

INTRODUCTION

Hill Holt Wood (HHW) is an environmental social enterprise based in 14 hectares of ancient woodland. The business provides life-changing training for young learners excluded from education and the young unemployed.

Hill Holt is now widely recognised as a ground breaking project at the forefront of social forestry and rural social enterprise. Increasingly interest is being shown from organisations throughout Britain in the possibility of replicating part or the entire project.

In these circumstances, the Board strongly believes that HHW must ensure that the model is both fit for purpose and an appropriate exemplar. Social audit is a key tool for this process that identifies the environmental and social 'profit' of the enterprise. This may be of benefit for HHW in raising support, recognising the positive benefits of contracting to the business and it will certainly be an advantage to replica projects evidencing the range of positive outcomes to assist in raising start up funding.

Included with this social audit is the financial audit as Hill Holt Wood is based on the principle of a balance between the economic, environmental and social objectives for a truly sustainable project.

Social audit is also part of a series of actions designed to evaluate performance against targets to aid continued development and improved performance.

For all the above reasons a formal process of audit with internal and external verification is essential to ensure recognition of the evidence by funding bodies and government agencies.



HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

Hill Holt Wood was purchased by Nigel and Karen Lowthrop in 1995. It was in poor condition with invasive rhododendron, a damaged drainage system and the majority of the quality timber removed by the previous owners. In 1997 the Hill Holt Wood Management Committee was established as a link between the owners and the surrounding community.

Initially representing four parishes this developed in the following five years to eleven parishes with a population totalling in excess of 10000. Throughout this time a business in the wood based on training was established, owned and managed by Karen and Nigel. This business, ECONS, applied the key principles that still lie at the core of the social enterprise.

E ECONOMIC (FINANCIAL)

C COMMUNITY (SOCIAL)

O OPPORTUNITY

N NATURAL (ENVIRONMENTAL)

=

S SUSTAINABILITY

In the year 2000 ground breaking planning permission was granted to Nigel and Karen for an eco-house in the wood. As part of this long process the District Council recognised that the business generated income by Forestry and business ancillary to forestry. This national first only happened due to the hard work and support of the local community.

In recognition of this Nigel and Karen proposed stronger links with the community to increase the sustainability of the business, the community involvement and, through this, the woodland environment. Advice, supported by Lincolnshire Co-operative Society, pointed towards social enterprise and in due course the business was transferred to community control. The model chosen was that of a company limited by guarantee. Hill Holt wood (Limited) was established on June 1st 2002 and has rapidly established a solid business base and an excellent reputation.

This social audit takes place at the close of the third year as a social enterprise, a year that has added considerably to the list of prestigious visitors to the project and the growing range of case studies on the project. Highlights of the year include:

- Royal visit, HRH the Earl of Wessex
- A winner of the Enterprising Solutions Award
- Publication of a report on HHW commissioned by the Forestry Commission, Social Research Unit.
- Sir Brian Bender, 'Seeing is Believing' visit.
- Winner Social Entrepreneur of the year International Association of Book-keepers
- Panellist favourite Deputy Prime Ministers Sustainable Communities Award.



ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

The membership of Hill Holt Wood is open to any individual or organisation that agrees to support the aims and objectives as defined in the Articles of Association, and in addition, accepts the limited liability of £1.00.

There are five categories of membership individuals, funders, corporate, faith and staff. Each category elects members to the Board of Directors from their number, with Board members serving for three years before standing for re-election. An important aspect of the business is the inclusion of an elected staff director as well as the project director representing the staff. A full operational flow chart follows.

MEMBERSHIP

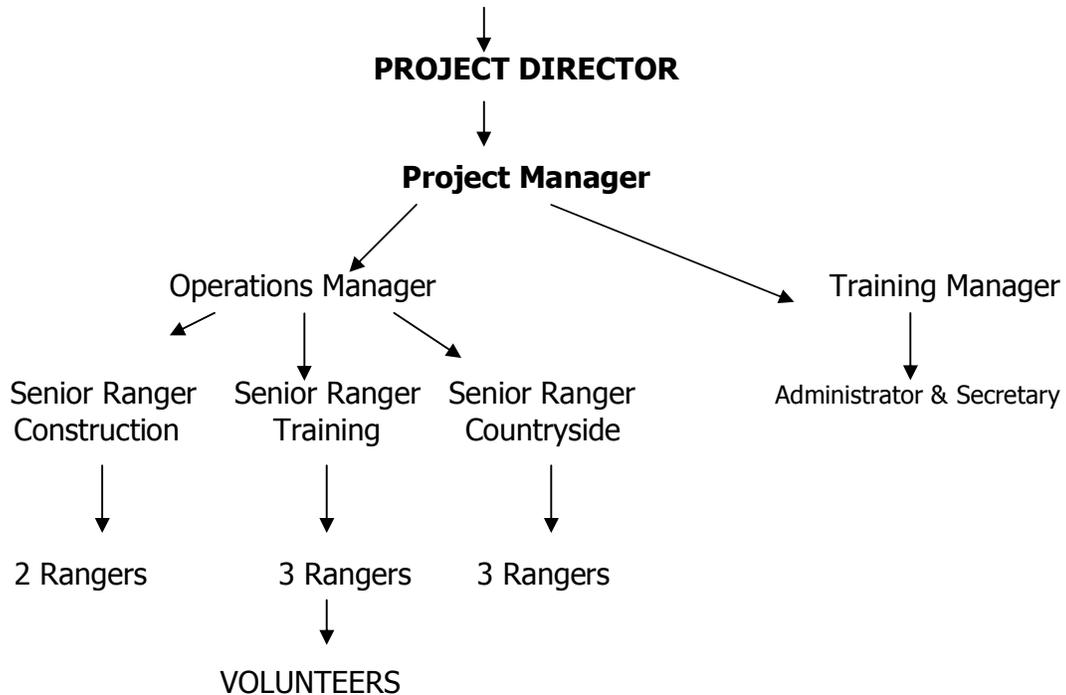
INDIVIDUALS	CORPORATE	STAFF Elected directors	FAITH	FUNDERS	PROJECT DIRECTOR
7	4	1	1	2	1

BOARD

15 Directors + company secretary + auditors

EXECUTIVE

Chair + Deputy Chair + 4 Directors + Project Director + Company Secretary



Hill Holt Wood Mission, Values, Objectives and Activities

Mission:

PROVING THE VALUE OF ANCIENT WOODLAND IN THE 21st CENTURY

Values:

- Environmental - Positive environmental impact
- Social - Local community ownership and control
Positive social impact
- Economic - Financial independence

Objectives: Three key core objectives based on the "ECONS" concept with additional objectives to be an empowering effective employer and to promote the principles of Hill Holt Wood to a wider audience.

1. To run environmentally sustainable woodland by.....

- 1.1 *Managing horticulture, permaculture and animal husbandry on a sustainable basis.*
- 1.2 *Managing the woodland sustainably*
- 1.3 *Monitoring the progress of flora and fauna to increase biodiversity*
- 1.4 *Developing and applying alternative/appropriate building, energy generation and manufacturing technology.*
- 1.5 *Staying "off-grid"*

2. To run a locally-valued social enterprise by.....

- 2.1 *Providing amenity, facilities and access to local people and organisations within a safe, accessible, supportive and informative site.*
- 2.2 *Providing education, training and employment preparation advice to excluded school-children, young offenders and unemployed or otherwise disadvantaged young people.*
- 2.3 *Developing and implementing structures which facilitate community control.*
- 2.4 *Using local goods, materials and services.*
- 2.5 *Contributing our services and skills to the local community.*

3. To run an economically viable social enterprise by.....

- 3.1 *Achieving an annual surplus for investment and innovation*

3.2 *Maintaining a diversity of income streams, clients, products and services*

3.3 *Manufacturing and selling woodland added-value products*

3.4 *Delivering consultancy services*

In addition

4. To be a good employer by.....

4.1 *Operating to "Investors In People" standards and processes*

4.2 *Funding and providing opportunities for personal and career development*

4.3 *Facilitating internal promotion and professional improvement*

4.4 *Carrying out regular appraisals which emphasise skills, competence and performance as core ingredients and which reward individual and collective achievement*

4.5 *Balancing job quality and financial incentive*

4.6 *Encouraging an open, transparent, supportive, self-reliant, confident culture*

5. Networking and influence by.....

5.1 Promoting success and influencing policy

5.2 Provide 'experience' days and promote knowledge transfer

5.3 Participate in networking opportunities

5.4 Establish sustainable relationships with government, charities and representative organisations.

5.5 Promote success through media, internet and publications.



STAKEHOLDERS

Hill Holt Wood has a wide range of stakeholders and consultation for the first social audit may be in some cases limited. A comprehensive list is included below with an indication of whether or not they were consulted.

Key Stakeholders

1.	The membership	NOT CONSULTED
2.	The Board of Directors	QUESTIONNAIRES *not included, only 1 returned*
3.	The community as represented by;	
	Surrounding parishes	NOT CONSULTED
	Visitors	QUESTIONNAIRES
	Schools	NOT CONSULTED
	Friends of Hill Holt	QUESTIONNAIRES
4.	The Learners	
	Solutions 4 – excluded 14-16 year olds	QUESTIONNAIRES
	E2E young unemployed	QUESTIONNAIRES
	Direct provision for schools	NOT CONSULTED
	Parents of Learners	NOT CONSULTED
5.	The Staff	
	Paid	QUESTIONNAIRES
6.	Contract Providers	NOT CONSULTED
	Solutions 4 (Lincolnshire County Council EBSS) ¹	HEALTH & SAFETY REVIEW
	L.S.C. ²	ALI ³ INSPECTION
	Individual Schools	
7.	Funding organisations	NOT CONSULTED
	RACOL	GRANT REVIEW
	SEEM	GRANT REVIEW

¹ Alternative Key Stage Four Education

² Learning and Skills Council

³ Adult learning Inspectorate

LSC (in addition to contractual arrangements through E2E).

LID BID

8. Partner Organisations

Forestry Commission
Forest Enterprise
Forest Research
North Kesteven District Council
EMDA
DEFRA

DTI
Lincs Police
GOEM
Connexions
Shaw Trust

CASE STUDY
CONTRACT CHAMBERS
RESEARCH PAPER
LSP MEMBERSHIP

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE
POLICY PAPER
CASE STUDY
QUOTE
EXPERIENCE DAY

Additional stakeholders not to be consulted in this audit include:

Newark and Sherwood District Council
Lincolnshire County Council
Local Strategic Partnership

Other agencies seeking replication of the concept

Youth Offending
Probation
Forestry Contracting Association
Woodland Trust
Social enterprise Coalition

Results of surveys, recorded and analysed by the University of Lincoln Department of Business Studies .

Professor Andrew Atherston

Kirk Frith, Research Associate

Comments selected to show a wide range of views.



METHODOLOGY

To look at the scope of work covered it was decided to produce a narrative of the physical result of work carried out on and off site. This includes the environmental impact, beneficial and negative, from the HHW 'green' approach to construction

Consultation of the stakeholders was by a series of questionnaires circulated around the various stakeholders. In addition, consultees were requested to add any specific comments.

Hill Holt Wood is at present, with the support of the Lincolnshire CDA⁴ preparing a comprehensive business plan for the year 2005 - 2006. Part of this process is meeting with the staff facilitated by the CDA to 'take ownership' of the business plan.

During the period covered by the social audit, Hill Holt also received an Adult Learning Inspectorate report, renewal of the Investors in People Award and a number of Health and Safety inspections. Copies are included as part of the evidence of this audit. The audit will form part of the Hill Hilt Wood Annual Report to members.

In addition a whole series of case studies and articles provide further evidence of the external view of Hill Holt from Agencies and individuals.



⁴ Co-operative Development Agency

THE AUDIT – how well is Hill Holt Wood performing against its own objectives?

The degree to which HHW is achieving its objectives is the focus of this audit, but only staff were directly asked this question. Whether or not it is meeting all its objectives will be covered section by section below, with relevant information from relevant stakeholders being provided in each.

Staff were the only stakeholders directly asked this question and there is good agreement and understanding across the entire staff on HHW's objectives. There is good agreement that, in general, HHW's objectives are being achieved. Considerable information can be extrapolated from the numerous case studies and reports on Hill Holt.

What do you think HHW as an organisation is attempting to achieve?

"Nationwide change in business – the way they are run and the social and environmental responsibilities of business"

"HHW aims to improve and involve the communities around it"

"To change attitudes towards social enterprises and woodlands"

"To help change the lives of the individuals and learners"

"proving that people can live and work with nature"

"To prove the value of ancient woodland in the 21st Century"

"community involvement"

"Getting our learners into jobs"

"The promotion of a social enterprise as an alternative to the usual commercial business models"

"Positive social, environmental and financial outcomes"

** 1= strongly agree.....5=strongly disagree**	1	2	3	4	5
I think the values of HHW are important	75%	17%	8%	0	0
I enjoy working with my colleagues	92%	8%	0	0	0
I feel I am achieving my personal goals	25%	58%	8%	8%	0
I think what I'm doing here is important	67%	33%	0	0	0
I enjoy working with the E2E's ⁵ and the Sol 4's	17%	67%	17%	0	0

Do you think that HHW is achieving its aims and objectives?

Yes 71%

No 0%

Some 29%

Please provide reasons for your answer

"To properly achieve current and future aims we need more staff time and money"

"Excellent target success with learners and the growth and expansion of the business"

"It's not perfect, but on balance, the organisation is moving in a positive direction towards all its objectives"

"the company is definitely getting well-known throughout the UK"

"not all of our learners are put into jobs they enjoy"

"I'm not sure what all the aims and objectives are but I'm sure were achieving most of them"

"We manage to change positively the lives of some of the learners"

⁵ Entry to Employment training scheme for 16-19 year olds

Environment

1. To run environmentally sustainable woodland by.....

- 1.1 *Managing horticulture, permaculture and animal husbandry on a sustainable basis.*
- 1.2 *Managing the woodland sustainably*
- 1.3 *Monitoring the progress of flora and fauna to increase biodiversity*
- 1.4 *Developing and applying alternative/appropriate building, energy generation and manufacturing technology.*
- 1.5 *Staying "off-grid"*

Permaculture - A system of perennial agriculture emphasising the use of renewable natural resources and the enrichment of local ecosystems.

1.1 – the garden



Permaculture Garden and Horticulture Department social audit 2004-2005

The Permaculture Garden and Horticulture Department at Hill Holt Wood have been a source of learning, health, leisure and inspiration to many people who have come into contact with them. Directly and indirectly they have helped improve quality of life in the local community and beyond.

Visitors to the garden have included special schools, volunteers, gardening clubs, forestry organisations, visiting dignitaries and members of the local community of all ages. The garden has also been a focal point for the activities of learners and staff at HHW.

As a place of learning the Permaculture Garden aims to show the importance of sustainability and working with nature. Various techniques and practices are demonstrated, explained and labelled, and new techniques are researched. Regular learners are taught practical skills and knowledge in horticulture and permaculture, together with communication and social skills which arise from, for example, being given the opportunity to nurture something as it grows. They have their eyes opened to a wide range of foods, cultivated and wild. Tours, impromptu and planned, are given to groups and individuals. Special schools visit regularly to work in the garden; raised beds making hands-on learning open to all. Volunteers are given the chance to work with staff in an ecological garden.

As a place of health the garden provides fruit and vegetables for staff, learners and visitors (amongst whom our unique salads are always a talking point). The complete

avoidance of chemicals and techniques such as the no-dig technique ensure the produce has maximum goodness. The garden has a positive effect on the health of learners; the activity of gardening improves well being, and many learners have enjoyed the taste of their first fresh produce while working in the garden. Learners and visitors are encouraged to take produce home to share. Pot plants, in particular edible and medicinal herbs, are sold at a low price.

As a place of leisure the garden provides interest, beauty and quiet for learners, staff and visitors and is a valuable amenity for the local community. The garden is wheelchair friendly and provides a variety of places to sit in the shade or sun. Everyone loves the friendly pigs and are encouraged to feed them weeds.

As a place of inspiration the garden broadens horizons. It has encouraged learners to change their attitude towards nature, fostered an interest in horticulture which has led to employment in the field, bred enthusiasm for nature and gardening which is passed on to family and friends, changed attitudes towards food and encouraged staff, learners and visitors to grow their own, caused experienced gardeners to try out more sustainable techniques and helped volunteers to seek out more experience in the field of sustainability.

All this is done with an ecological, holistic approach; materials are reclaimed or locally sourced from either the wood or locally. Seed is saved; waste is minimised, reused or recycled. Biodiversity and garden health is encouraged using bird boxes, feeders, ponds, insect hotels, wild areas, crop diversity, companion planting and permaculture and organic methods. The diversification of this approach, as well as the supply of locally grown produce and plants helps local people to reduce the ecological impact of their lifestyle.

ROB MACBETH, PERMACULTURE GARDEN

1.2 & 1.3 - the wood

Hill Holt Wood, a nature haven

At HHW we are the champions of the environment. All our actions and policies favour the ecology of the woods and aim at delivering a positive environmental impact.

A score of bird, bat and owl boxes and about two dozen bird feeding stations are dotted throughout the woods. Thus bird life is very rich at Hill Holt Woods. Species include kingfishers, greater and lesser spotted woodpeckers, nuthatches, tits, finches and myriad others.

We have counted so far 7 species of bats which use HHW for feeding or nesting and there is hope that more could be discovered (Species include Daubenton, Pip 45, Noctules, Whiskered, leislars and natterers.)

Several protected species can also be found in HHW, e.g. badgers and water voles. Native fauna and flora have been favoured and pest numbers have been strictly controlled.

Our Ranger/Gamekeeper estimates that in the last 4 years around 150 grey squirrels

and 60 rabbits were killed. Consequently the native hare population has never been healthier and without so many alien rodents natural tree regeneration has been amazing. We also aim at preserving and hopefully increasing flora diversity by hand clearing the competing vegetation, most especially bramble.

A constant war against Rhododendron is waged. In the last ten years it has been estimated that 75% of the Rhododendron has been cleared. Furthermore it must be noted that no chemicals (pesticides or herbicides) are ever used in our forestry and conservation operations.

We fell our timber using the selection system, which has a minimal impact on the fauna and flora and often has positive impacts by creating a more diverse habitat range thus increasing biodiversity.

We also make mistakes at HHW and the attempt to use a rare breed of pigs to clear some of the undergrowth turned sour when they were kept too long on the same area and transformed it into a quagmire. The pigs were sold and the patch of ground left to revert to a more typical woodland floor.

One must not forget that HHW is only 34 acres big, and there are some limitations as to how much positive environmental impact it can implement. However on the whole, we learn from our mistakes and are building a solid and intrinsic environmental base to HHW where the environmental side has as much importance as the economical and social side of the management of the woods.

DAVID BENJAMIN, RANGER



Visitors' comments						
** 1= strongly agree.....5=strongly disagree... DK = don't know**	1	2	3	4	5	DK
I think returning ancient woodland to its original condition is important	92%	0	0	0	0	8%
I value and support ideas regarding environmental sustainability	84%	17%	0	0	0	0
I feel that, based on my observations/impressions, the staff of Hill Holt Wood are doing a good job	75%	25%	0	0	0	0
I would suggest to my family and friends that they visit Hill Holt Wood	100%	0	0	0	0	0
I would like to see more projects like Hill Holt Wood opened throughout the UK	100%	0	0	0	0	0
I felt safe and comfortable during my visit	92%	8%	0	0	0	0

Hill Holt wood in Lincolnshire 'helping to save the planet

A Norton Disney couple have been highlighted by Environment Secretary Margaret Beckett for leading the way in acting sustainably.

Their work on Hill Holt Wood on the A46 between Lincoln and Newark was selected as a leading example of how it is possible to be successful and use its resources efficiently.

Margaret Beckett, MP

Visitor Comments

Please could you provide details of the reason for your visit?

"to see the wildlife, peace and quiet, trees"

"Peace quiet, nature"

"An interest in sustainable technologies, practices and buildings"

"Wedding celebration"

In the space below, please add any additional comments that (i) you feel might help us to improve HHW's visitor's experiences, that (ii) could be fed back to staff and associates of HHW, etc.

"More products for sale(homemade), e.g. logs with prices, tree spotting guides"

"information about the boars, age, gender, care needs etc."

"It's perfect, keep up the good work, love it all"

"Perhaps more information about the work that is done at HHW as I only found out about it by talking to a ranger"

"HHW was an excellent venue for a wedding celebration"

"It's all great stuff, but a general feeling; perhaps don't try to cramp too many activities/developments/buildings/paths into what is a small bit of woodland"

"Perhaps more information regarding where you are, and where you aren't allowed to go"

If you had to describe HHW in three words what would they be?

"Welcoming; gives real hope; authentic(staff and environment)"

"Peace; harmony; beautiful"

"Welcoming; environmental; woodland"

"Pleasant; interesting; environment"

"Community-spirited; forward thinking; inspiring"

HHW has seen great environmental improvements over the last 10 years, since it was taken over by Karen and Nigel Lowthrop, and in the past year management has continued. A considerable proportion of Rhododendron has now been removed, the ancient drainage system has been mostly dug out, regeneration of trees in the wood is very strong and new planting is mainly from trees within the wood, and always of native species. There are areas of the wood that have suffered to some extent from the development within the wood but as a result the health of the rest of the wood has greatly improved from the management it has received. We would argue that non-intervention as a means to conservation would have seen the same wood, over the same period, decline into the species poor, rhododendron infested jungle state that most forests suffer from in the UK. The fact that HHW overall has a thriving and improving flora and fauna is doubtless however management and monitoring has been sporadic in the past. The wood is now at the stage of health and order where long term management plans can be effectively applied, and cyclic monitoring of the wood by local interest groups such as the Lincolnshire Bat Group, entomological and mycological societies, would form very interesting records and would help channel our management practices in the future, for the benefit of wildlife in the wood.

DAVE HOLMES – RANGER

1.4 & 1.5 – development

The buildings of HHW are all low-cost, appropriate developments made from local materials. It is uncertain as to how long these buildings will last as the buildings themselves are, to some extent, experimental. However they have so far served very well and attract a good deal of interest from visitors. Developments so far in HHW meet the criteria of the objectives of HHW.

Energy generation on site is in the form of a diesel powered generator. The reliability of this source to consistently supply enough electricity for our operations has been essential. However it does not match well with our environmental aims whilst there are alternative, more appropriate technologies such as wind power or combined heat and power generators on the market. Staying off-grid is not foreseen as being a problem in the near or distant future, though a more appropriate method of generation should be an environmental priority.

DAVE HOLMES – RANGER

Hill Holt Building Works

Classroom

Due to the increasing number of learners on site it was decided that an additional classroom should be constructed. The best place for this was decided as adjacent to the main office, thereby solving two problems.

1. Lack of teaching space
2. Lack of insulation of the main office

The classroom forms an extension of the existing office which is of mixed construction; the main section being straw bale, with a timber frame structure on the western elevation. By adding the new classroom on the west of the timber frame section insulation of the whole building was greatly improved. Also by extending the main building, rainwater collection was possible from a single large roof area. The final finish of the building is lime render which allows the straw to breathe and over its lifetime is carbon neutral. In order for the render to work effectively the outside mix is harder than the internal mix, enabling moisture to be drawn to the outside of the building. For this reason the building is painted externally with an emulsion based paint. The key to the successful use of straw bale in the UK weather conditions is to keep the base and top of the straw dry. This is achieved using blockwork for the base and a large overhang at the eaves. Roof insulation is provided using recycled newspaper (warmcell) and the floor insulation is provided by a polystyrene sheet.



Staff Room

During the construction of the classroom a partition wall was put in at the western end to provide an area for the staff to store their personal effects. Heating is in the form of a small wood burning fire. The construction of the building was carried out by learners on site under the supervision of rangers. This provided a valuable learning experience in alternative construction techniques.

Compound area including chainsaw store

With the purchase of larger scale equipment it was necessary to provide secure weatherproof storage. This was achieved by the construction of a large open fronted pole barn to the south of the office buildings. A secure chainsaw store was also constructed at the eastern end of this building. This was constructed using solid concrete blocks providing the learners with the opportunity to carry out traditional construction work. The total area of the pole barn and store is 90m² which provided a great opportunity for learners to gain experience in roof

construction and basic joinery. The building houses all grass cutting equipment and large forestry plant.

Windows

The windows in all the buildings are recycled double glazing units given to HHW by a local company. Twenty percent of custom double glazing units are rejected due to incorrect measurements. HHW can utilise these units by construction its own frames to suit the pane size.

ABE HERSHELL-WATTS - RANGER

The Shower Block

We have an area in the wood known as the Roman Villa Clearing where we hold functions, camping, meetings and Duke of Edinburgh activities. One of the rangers also lives on the clearing.

It had got to the point at Hill Holt Wood where the Director suggested that a shower block was needed both for the residents on site and for camping visitors. The main camping area on site is the Roman Villa clearing so it seemed logical to extend on to the existing earth loo; as one wall was already built and we would have a larger roof area from which to collect the rain water. The rain water is filtered before being pumped through a gas boiler and in to the shower cubicles.

The waste water is then channelled through a pipe to a buried straw bale which keeps the smell down and acts a stopgap.

Information Booth – Car park

It was decided that we build a small building in the car park to replace the dishevelled looking notice board that had 'served it's time'. To keep costs down the building was designed to be 12' x 6' i.e. the size of a full length board. This meant that off-cuts or waste timber were kept to an absolute minimum.

Originally it was going to have a corrugated tin roof but at the time the funding was not available so we decided to try our hand at making shingles from our own wood. As we had no cedar on site we decided to use ash as our raw material. Each and every shingle was hand made by the learners and staff (approx. 600 shingles) the only real cost being in time!

The building is totally free standing (without foundations) and in theory could just be picked up and moved if it was not so heavy! It now houses posters, information, membership forms as well as a range of items for sale that are also hand crafted in the wood.



The Mud Oven

As part of a learning curve for both myself and the learners I decided to build a mud oven. The logical place for it was at the BBQ site in the Roman villa clearing where a brick oven had already been started. With a bit of alteration this would be the perfect site.

First we needed to build a circular base to bring the oven up to a suitable working height. To keep costs down we used recycled bricks that were originally used as landfill under the paths in the permaculture garden. Once the brick base was built we needed to fill it with rubble and sand to create the thermal mass on which the oven will stand. After laying a base of clean flat bricks for the oven base we made a dome shaped sand form which would create the inside of the oven. This was then covered with cob (a mixture of sand, clay and straw) and finally with a layer of cow manure as a hard finishing plaster. Once the cob was dry enough we cut a door, removed the sand to form the space inside the oven and made a wooden door to fit in the hole.

We then fire the oven, patch up any cracks with clay and we are ready to bake. Bread, Pizza, chicken...whatever!

MARK LLOYD - RANGER



Environmental Summary

The remarks received from visitors to the wood were very positive and it is clear that they enjoy the wood and appreciate its amenity value. Long term management plans and an environmental policy may help ensure that the quality and diversity of habitats in maintained in the future.

Some visitors and staff expressed concern over the impact that developments are having in the wood and it is important to bear in mind that all developments must be as environmentally friendly and low-impact as possible. Much development has gone on in the wood this year and we must also be careful of the ratio of building area to woodland area. Limits should be set on the footprint of buildings in the wood and written into long term management plans of the wood.

Increased, periodic monitoring of the myriad species and habitats in the wood will guide management policy and act as important records for the wood in the future, to compare future audits against. Recording techniques should be systematic for ease of collection and comparison.

More information is required within the wood to cover flora and fauna and information about the business itself.

Social

1 To run a locally-valued social enterprise by.....

- 2.1 Providing amenity, facilities and access to local people and organisations within a safe, accessible, supportive and informative site.*
- 2.2 Providing education, training and employment preparation advice to excluded school-children, young offenders and unemployed or otherwise disadvantaged young people.*
- 2.3 Developing and implementing structures which facilitate community control.*
- 2.4 Using local goods, materials and services.*
- 2.5 Contributing our services and skills to the local community.*

2.1. Amenities at Hill Holt Wood

During the past 12 months the facilities at Hill Holt Wood have improved greatly. The paths are maintained regularly with the clearing of weeds and adding more limestone; several paths have also been widened to let vehicles drive on. There have been new footpaths added into the wood; one of these goes from Ellie's wood to the Memorial site and will enable easy access to these sites and different routes for walking around.

There have been new signposts added and the old ones have been repaired, new information boards have been put up around the woodland with up-to-date information on them. There has been a new information centre built in the car-park with maps of the wood, information on trees, application forms etc. there is also a ramp for wheelchair/pushchair access.

Public earth toilets have been added due to the increasing amounts of visits and open days held. Seats and benches have been put around the woodland; and older ones have been taken down and replaced. At the Roman Villa clearing there are more tables and chairs for visitors to use.

At the bund near the entrance and alongside the car park there has been wooden steps installed for access to the top. The bird hide at the entrance has been repaired providing extra camouflage.

VICKY WHARFE – RANGER



Visitor comments

Please could you provide details of the reason for your visit?

- "Peace, quiet, nature"
- "wedding Party"
- "an interest in sustainable technologies, practices and buildings"
- "wedding"
- "first couple of visits as a leisure activity to see the woodland and the renewable energy and community projects being set up here"

How long was your visit?

0-30 mins	0%
30-60	8%
1- 2 hours	25%
2+ hours	68%

Please indicate on a scale of 1-5, your views of the following (1=very good, 5= very poor)

	1	2	3	4	5
Accessibility	75%	17%	-	8%	-
Facilities	34%	50%	17%	-	-
Staff friendliness	75%	25%	-	-	-

What was the most enjoyable aspect of your visit?

- "everything"
- "I enjoyed the Green Wood Working"
- "The quiet woodland surroundings"
- "To see examples of different building types using local and natural materials and methods"
- "amazing established garden"
- "beautiful oven"
- "relaxed atmosphere"

What can you think of that would improve HHW/make it more attractive to visitors?

- "a whistle in case you get lost"
- "nothing"
- "Nothing – it's perfect"
- "Couldn't find any running water"
- "love the sculptures and info. – more of the same"
- "A little more info on HHW history and future plans"
- "I tried to access the website but nothing came up – probably bad luck"

There have been many events over the past year, including 2 weddings, 4 experience days, RaCOL event BBQ, Summerlink, 3 eco-burials and a memorial service, however events targeted at the members of HHW have been poorly attended. The friends of HHW were questioned as to how well informed they have been of events at HHW, what events they would like to see at HHW, how we should inform them of these events. It was disappointing to only get 43% of the 53 questionnaires we sent returned, however below is a summary of their opinions.

Friends survey findings

Of the 23 returns, 12 were interested in attending events in the wood, the numbers below refer to the opinions of those 12.

	Yes	no	Comments
Want organised walks?	10	2	Not at 7.30pm
Want a focus for walks	8	1	
Want talks/lectures	10		Natural history, woodland management, young people presentation, history of the wood, insect recognition, gardening, wood working, hurdle and chair making, simple tree tour
Want conservation days	3	4	Some don't know what this meant
Conservation activities			Maintenance, planting, work party, bird ID
Events publicised enough?	2	6	2 didn't say
How improved?			Lincs. Echo, Newark advertiser, posters, notice boards, website.
Other events in wood			BBQ, summer music event, specific events for kids e.g. pond dipping, pig roast and cider event was fantastic.
Improvements to newsletter			Better pics. Needed, acronyms and initials need to be explained, needs colour, should

The opinions of the visitors to the wood are somewhat biased in that around half of the forms completed were from a single event (wedding) that took place on site. However the survey was still useful and both highlighted the enjoyment experienced by visitors and the improvements they felt could be made.

Visitors feel safe and comfortable around the wood and this is reflected in the diverse demography of visitors. Perhaps future audits could gather more information on the age and sex of visitors as most amenity parks are biased towards males walking dogs, and we feel we have more of a mix.

There appears to be a lack of information around the wood, both of the flora and fauna and of the business itself; better signs and information boards are needed.

Visitors are ill-informed of events that are occurring in the wood and better promotion of our activities is needed in the area to encourage more people to enjoy the woodland.

The friend's survey also shows a lack of information, in that we are not informing our members sufficiently as to events that are occurring within the wood, or where we are exactly and what we do. Improvements to the newsletter may communicate such information better as they will be more likely to read them but also posters, press releases and website improvements may help solve the issue.

Half of the returned friend's surveys indicate an interest in attending events held within the wood including talks on the history of the wood, flora and fauna etc.

Perhaps environmental talks and walks could be provided by local interest groups and the members invited along; this would both monitor the flora and fauna better and provide quality events for locals.

2.2 Education

Education is the core activity of HHW; it is our main source of funds and the vehicle through which our objectives are achieved. It is of paramount importance that we meet our targets in this area in the form of making real impact on people's lives and thus on the communities in which they live. We feel we are achieving our aims in this area very well and this is reflected in the outcomes of the learners and their final destinations upon leaving. Many are in further education, apprenticeships and other vocational training, and many are now in full time employment. Certainly many of these learners would have been in much less favourable conditions had it not been for our work at HHW.

DAVE HOLMES - RANGER



Training at Hill Holt Wood

Hill Holt Wood has a proven track record in delivering life skill training to young people. Our trainers work closely with students to improve communication, team-work and work towards achieving recognised certificated courses. All learners attending HHW have an individual learning plan and a mentor.

As a community based project with strong local links, students have the opportunity to interact with the public and enhance their sense of citizenship by undertaking appropriate voluntary work.

Hill Holt offers a range of vocational training including construction work, horticulture, motor mechanics, woodland skills, office and clerical, landscaping, animal husbandry and introduction to the military as a career. Citizenship and basic skills are also offered.

Students can participate in the Duke of Edinburgh and NPTC Awards, which will help students to be recognised for their achievements.

Hill Holt Wood will provide the students with the following levels of support:

- Guidance and support throughout the programme

- Allocation of named individual to act as a key worker to each student
- Support to ensure students have reviews with their connexions advisor
- Continuous evaluation to ensure that student's targets are being met
- Training and support for students with a range of difficulties including learning, behavioural and attitudinal problems
- Referral to specialist agencies if required for specialist support, e.g. drugs counselling

Successes include learners achieving places at Riseholme College to achieve a diploma course in Countryside Management without GCSE qualifications. We are also successful in finding sustainable jobs for our learners locally.

OUTCOMES FOR 2004/2005

SOLUTIONS 4 LEARNERS⁶

TOTAL LEARNERS	ATTENDANCE RATE	Progression ⁷ To FE/Employment	Achievement rate Key skills Level 1
20	80%	83%	65%

OUTCOMES FOR 2004/2005

E2E LEARNERS

TOTAL LEARNERS	EMPLOYMENT	FE	APPRENTICESHIP	STILL IN LEARNING AT HHW
41	37%	10%	3%	37%

Karen Lowthrop, Training and HR manager

Equality and diversity

Equality awareness

All staff have attended workshops on various aspects of equality.

Learners have attended workshops on equality and on bullying.

Learners attended a workshop on Travellers and their culture to improve understanding of other cultures. During this time we had a young traveller attending HHW each week working towards her Duke of Edinburgh Award. The workshop helped our other learners to accept her into their circle.

We accept young people from a wide range of backgrounds including ex offenders, substance misuse, challenging behaviour, excluded from mainstream education, in care of the local authority or have just left care, also those with physical and learning disabilities.

We also assist a local school for special needs children by allowing them to use the wood every week to enable them to work towards their Duke of Edinburgh Awards.

⁶ Excluded under 16 learners all male

⁷ Year 11 only

We have created 2 disabled parking spaces and new buildings are wheelchair friendly. Improved signs in the wood are easier to see for the visually impaired.

A disability audit was carried out to assess our facilities and recommend improvements. Publicity materials have been upgraded to reflect the diversity of our workforce and learners.

MARGARET HAY-BARR - ADMINISTRATOR

"The staff use their knowledge and experience effectively to inspire the learners and motivate them to achieve. Learners are given full opportunity to express their knowledge and to demonstrate their practical skills. Staff and learners have developed strong working relationships, based on mutual respect".

ALI Inspection Report, February 2005

<p>Learner comments <i>What do you enjoy most about HHW?</i></p> <p>"We do practical things all day" "it's all outdoors" "I like being creative and working with my hands" "Green Wood Working" "I like working with the rangers" "I enjoy grass cutting"</p>	<p>Staff Comments <i>I would recommend HHW as a place to...</i></p> <p>Be educated 75%</p> <p><i>What do you feel is the most rewarding aspect of your work?</i> "Having a positive response from the learners" "Showing that a different approach works"</p>
<p>Learner comments <i>If you had to describe HHW in three words, what would they be?</i> "open; green; good" "open; green; hard" "small; fun; work full" "fantastic; fun; enjoyable" "boring; a laugh; helpful" "unusual; experience; helpful" "cool; wicked; brilliant"</p> <p><i>Do you enjoy coming to HHW?</i> Yes 42% no 11% sometimes 47%</p> <p><i>What do you think is the most important thing about HHW?</i> "The rangers because they do a great job of teaching and of keeping the wood tidy" "Mechanic" "Working with your hands" "Blacksmithing" "To learn more skills" "they treat you pretty well" "Learning more skills" "The money we get at the end of the week" "To learn about the environment" "Health and safety" "Learning personal skills"</p> <p><i>From your point of view, how could HHW be improved/made better (if you could change anything about HHW, what would you change?)</i> "more activities at break" "more written work" "nothing" "size" "some fun activities" "you can't really improve it" "more money" "get rid of solutions4, and just have people here who are training for a real job" "I'm happy with the way HHW is" "more rangers" "we need a pool table"</p>	

2.3 Community control

HHW is owned by its members and the board is elected from this member base, by the members themselves. There have been no problems with this process but it is beyond the scope of this audit. In future audits it could be usefully incorporated into the members survey.

2.4 Using local goods.

This year Hill Holt Wood worked with the New Economics Foundation and in particular Justin Sacks on pioneering work in the Local Multiplier effect taken to three levels, LM3. A full audit effect including staff and supplier surveys of expenditure to assess the proportion of purchase locally as opposed to 'out of area'. The local areas of Hill Holt Wood was taken as Gainsborough, Lincoln, Sleaford and Newark, an area covering parts of Nottingham, West Lindsey and mainly North Kesteven. Level one is the expenditure with Hill Holt, level two is how Hill Holt spends the money and level three is how our suppliers and staff spend the money. Hill Holt came out with a score of £2.43 That is a pound spent by Lincolnshire Country Council will lead to £2.43 of circulated spending in the local area. The experience also highlighted small exceptions that could lead to further improvements in our local spending. In addition it also highlighted staff motivation in local spending in that a large superstore even though 'local' was regarded as money spent 'out of area'.

HHW is now featured in two case studies on LM3 and also in Justin Sacks newly published book.

Hard decisions have to be made and there is still room for improvement, particularly with regard to carbon dioxide and embodied energy. The generator and vehicles (minibuses) are particularly negative in their environmental impact.

2.5. Hill Holt in the community

Visitor comments

What do you think the purpose of Hill Holt Wood is (i.e.) what do you think HHW offers to the wider community?

"Investment in young people; a chance to see young people who are at risk of social exclusion being part of an inclusive social setting"

"A place to learn about woodland environment, sustainability"

"Peace and quiet and wildlife"

"education" "relaxation" "a pleasant place to visit"

"as a school - I think that it's a great way of alternative learning and skill development"

"to demonstrate viability of sustainable technologies/ practices"

Hill Holt in the community

Hill Holt Wood (HHW) interacts with its surrounding community in a number of ways. From the most obvious, as an amenity for the local area, through to the more unusual, such as creating the prize bowl for Lincoln's top nurse.

Local organisations often call on HHW for help. Be it to carry out tree surgery on unsafe conifers at Arbour village church or carrying out forestry commission contracts at Chambers wood.

If you were to walk through the wood to the village of Norton Disney, you would soon come across evidence of its relationship with HHW. The village used the management experience of rangers to undertake surveys of the Big Wood gravel extraction. Through this advice the village has been able to better conserve and protect the woodland there.

Move further a field and visit the John Blow School and you'll walk through gates built and installed by the rangers and young adults of HHW. You might then see children playing on climbing equipment painted by rangers, E2E's (the Governments Entry to Employment scheme) and SO4's (Key Stage 4). This same work force have also been involved in building the fence around the soft play area and most recently the construction of a wooden equipment store for toys.

This positive interaction has created a win-win situation. The local community has gained a high quality service from a nationally recognised social enterprise. Whilst the young adults based at HHW are able to get valuable practical experience and most importantly the basic skills of interacting and working within society.

NOEL BERGIN - RANGER



"Lincolnshire Police has had a long and successful relationship with Nigel Lowthrop and Hill Holt Wood. We commend any initiative that engages with young people and diverts them away from anti-social or criminal activities. Hill Holt Wood has repeatedly demonstrated its ability to do this with individuals who have not responded to more recognised and conventional types of engagements. Furthermore the young people from the Lincolnshire area who have experienced Hill Holt Wood have generally stayed out of the offending and anti-social cycle. They have gone on to contribute

positively towards society with the skills they have obtained and become an asset, rather than a drain on their local communities".
Nigel Kay, Chief Inspector and acting Community Safety Officer for the Lincolnshire Police Authority

Social Summary

From these comments it is clear that HHW is performing extremely well in its educational objectives, keeping learners very happy and engaged. Some learners request more time in classrooms whilst others praise more vocational work. To an extent this problem can't be solved but we try our best to accommodate the needs of all learners, and the fact that *both* these comments were made (rather than many requesting one type of learning) indicates the balance is pretty good.

The views each stakeholder group have of HHW are very different and this is unsurprising as the experience of HHW that each group receives is also vastly different. However it is good to see a common understanding of HHW's environmental and social objectives within both groups.

'Friends' of HHW need to be more informed and involved in events and more events need to occur. Once a reliable attendance is up and running there may be scope for supplying more involved, paid courses to locals and other interested parties.

As mentioned in the environmental summary, more information needs to be available around the wood, around local communities and on the website.

Financial

2 To run an economically viable social enterprise by.....

- 3.1 *Achieving an annual surplus for investment and innovation*
- 3.2 *Maintaining a diversity of income streams, clients, products and services*
- 3.3 *Manufacturing and selling woodland added-value products*
- 3.4 *Delivering consultancy services*

3.1. – accounts

Despite a dramatic reduction in the E2E contract within the first two months of the year (due to national issues) turnover increased by 20% to £368K. Profits for the year rose to £41,806 (11% net) with retained profits accumulated to date £112,355. These figures exclude capital grants, received during the year, largely due to SEEM funding, and the equipment purchased does not appear in the accounts but is obviously available to the business.

Turnover	£368,473
Profit	£ 41,806

3.2 – income streams

Income was again dominated by the two key contracts with Lincolnshire county Council (Solutions 4) and the Learning and Skills Council (E2E). Nottinghamshire pupil referral unit continued to provide a useful contribution. In addition significant grant funding was received from SEEM and the LSC.

3.3 – sales

The most significant new income stream was the construction of earth composting toilets (£8500) and the start of a path maintenance contract with Leisure Connection, the NKDC leisure contract holders. Added value woodland products such as furniture remain a relatively small contribution to turnover.

3.4 – consultancy services

Consultancy is still at a very early stage with many potential clients attending experience days. Two organisations have applied for funding for HHW services. In addition the director is working with a number of organisations to develop significant local projects that will replicate the underlying principles of Hill Holt Wood.

Financial summary

Effort should continue to be made to source other income streams as the reliance on two large contracts leaves the business in a vulnerable state. Developing further the consultancy services fits in well with all objectives as it also helps spread the Hill Holt Wood business model, whilst generating income at the same time.

Expected turnover for the year 2005/2006 is in the region of £450k, however it is felt that the business is reaching a ceiling on the amount of money it can generate without harming other objectives of the business. With retained profits of £112,000 over the first three years HHW has a strong base to establish a sustainable future.

4. To be a good employer by.....

- 4.1 *Operating to Investors In People standards and processes*
- 4.2 *Funding and providing opportunities for personal and career development*
- 4.3 *Facilitating internal promotion and professional improvement*
- 4.4 *Carrying out regular appraisals which emphasise skills, competence and performance as core ingredients and which reward individual and collective achievement*
- 4.5 *Balancing job quality and financial incentive*
- 4.6 *Encouraging an open, transparent, supportive, self-reliant, confident culture*

Investors in People

4.1

After three years HHW was again assessed for the IIP standard. This was successfully achieved with a glowing report from the inspector.

Staff Comments						
<i>I would recommend HHW as a place to work.</i>						
75% agreement						
** 1 = strongly agree	5 = strongly	1	2	3	4	5

4.2 Training

Staff Comments

In the past year I have received the following amount of training
 2-5 days - 50% more than 5 days - 34% (17% didn't answer)

** 1= strongly agree.....5=strongly disagree**	1	2	3	4	5
Since joining HHW I have received the amount of training I need to do my job	25%	34%	25%	17%	0
The training I received was worthwhile	25%	42%	17%	17%	0
The training was of a decent class	25%	58%	17%	0	0

Grants from SEEM & LSC combined with HHW led to a range of internal and external training courses.

4.3 Promotion

During the year a number of staff received upgrades and the staff structure was further refined. Despite the dramatic and unexpected last minute contract reduction a staff Christmas bonus was paid.

4.4 Appraisals

All staff receive a six month appraisal after their period of probation followed by a full annual appraisal and intermediate six month appraisals. This has been identified by IIP and the University of Lincoln as examples for a business of Hill Holt's size. Appraisals are used to assess re-grading, promotion and training requirements. Discussions have taken place at Board Level to add additional bands to the Ranger and Senior Ranger grades. It is also planned to set achievement levels for attaining higher bands.

4.5 Pay

Staff Comments

** 1= strongly agree.....5=strongly disagree**	1	2	3	4	5
I am satisfied with the hours I work	42%	42%	8%	8%	0
I am under too much pressure at work	17%	8%	58%	17%	0
I am satisfied with the pay I receive	17%	17%	25%	8%	34%

If you could change any aspect of the running of Hill Holt Wood, What would it be, and why?

"staff would be paid more and given more time off"

"There should be more senior rangers"

"better funding from the LEA to provide even better facilities for learners"

"I believe this wood is too intensively managed and that too many people are working here at one time; we work the wood too hard"

"some more up-to -date equipment"

"Edited minutes of the board and executive could be published; this would be more open and promote better understanding amongst staff especially as they are recognised stakeholders in the business."

The balance between pay and quality of experience is never an easy one. A choice has to be made between pay levels and the number of staff to ensure a lower supervisor/client rate. Pay was increased by a rate slightly higher than inflation and a Christmas bonus was paid.

The business recognises that typical of many Lincolnshire jobs it is unlikely that many staff could afford home purchase. A scheme is planned to develop affordable, environmental homes on site to rent to interested members of staff.

This concept will be developed through a Knowledge Transfer Partnership with the University of Lincoln.

4.6 Working Environment

Staff meetings take place on a weekly basis and the elected staff director acts as the conduit for information on the governance of the business. A number of staff 'events' such as Christmas Dinner, Bonfire, barbeques and training days have taken place. These have proved popular and will be increased in a number and scope in the future.

"Staff genuinely enjoy the work and the culture that has been created in the organisation, one team, supportive, caring, respecting other"
Investors in People

Employment summary

Staff enjoy working at HHW, especially with their colleagues and 'working conditions'. Staff are also generally happy about the hours they work.

Some staff feel they are under too much pressure but the majority feel neither too pressured nor too unpressured.

Staff have a wide range of opinion with regards to their pay, but overall are unhappy with the amount of pay they receive.

Staff are frustrated at the provision and quality of tools, many requesting additional funds be spent on acquiring and maintaining tools and equipment. This is despite an investment of 30k in tools and equipment over the year. Perhaps this suggests a greater input from the staff in the choice of equipment.

Some staff requested that edited minutes of the board should be readily available to staff as this would promote better understanding of the business and may encourage/ enable staff to become more involved in the running of the business.

Staff should be asked their opinion on the appraisal system and on promotions as these objectives have been beyond the scope of this audit.

Staff have highlighted both an appreciation of the training they have received and a desire for more training in order to do their job at a higher standard.

5. Networking and influence by.....

- 5.1 Promoting success and influencing policy
- 5.2 Provide 'experience' days and promote knowledge transfer
- 5.3 Participate in networking opportunities
- 5.4 Establish sustainable relationships with government, charities and representative organisations.
- 5.5 Promote success through media, internet and publications.

5.1 Influence

Our project director, Nigel Lowthrop has lectured at 3 international conferences – IUFRO, Edinburgh and the BSE conference; 10 national conferences including the Plunkett Foundation, Voice O5, Social Enterprise at Melton Mowbray, Edinburgh and Manchester, BIAT and the Community Woodlands conference; and many regional conferences including EMRAF and the Prince of Wales affordable housing conference.

HHW has featured in the Observer, the Royal Forestry Society quarterly, Tree News and the Social enterprise Magazine.

Visits to the wood have included the director of the Forestry Commission (FC) for England, the Chair of the Countryside Agency, The Earl of Wessex, The permanent secretary of DEFRA, the president of the Countryside Land and Business Association, the Royal Forestry Society National visit, the Regional Committee of the FC, the Gov. Office East Midlands rural affairs team, Rural Development Service East Midlands and we held the regional training day for DEFRA. All this year!

5.2 Experience days

HHW provided 4 experience days which are provided for businesses or organisations who wish to learn about the HHW business model and its work as a thriving social enterprise. It is hoped that these will be more frequent in the future as they are

both an alternative source of income and an important vehicle for dissemination of our philosophy. Those attending HHW experience days were supplied with a standard feedback form indicating a very high level of satisfaction.

5.3 Networking

HHW has a Regular place on the Lincolnshire sustainable development forum, the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) – environment panel and attends regular meetings with Whisby Nature Park. These stakeholders were not covered in this audit.

5.4 Partnerships

HHW has partnerships with the Woodland trust in the form of long term contracts in forestry management. HHW deals with North Kesteven District council (NKDC) and intends to form sustainable relationships with the council. Through the ESF scheme (E2E+ and pre E2E) HHW is negotiating a partnership with CG partnership and Youth Services. These stakeholders were not covered in this audit.

5.5 Promotion of HHW

It has been clear throughout this document that promotion of HHW is lacking on all fronts; the website needs updating, information needs to be made more readily available to locals and to visitors both of events in the wood, flora and fauna in the wood and information about the business. On the other hand, the business has been extremely influential in its attendance and impact on highly regarded panels, in highly regarded conferences and in the winning of national awards such as social enterprise of the year.

This has not always been carried out formally but when it has a very high level of support has been achieved. The most common word used after experience days on visits is 'inspirational'. Events are not always well attended and the website not always accessible.

With mentions in a series of government reports and publications as well as numerous case studies, we are confident that we can claim some success in influencing policy.

Influence summary

HHW has had an astounding influence on academics and policy makers within this auditing period and, along with the quality of education provided, it is a real strength of the business.

Experience days have been successful as far as we know but it would be useful to receive feedback from those who attended.

Thank you

We would like to take this opportunity to thank SEEM for financing the programme. Lisa Sanfillipo of NEF and John Pearce for their training, support and advice.

In particular we would like to thank Kirk Frith of the University of Lincoln for volunteering his impartial support to receive and interpret the survey results.

