

Wye Wood Project Herefordshire



Introduction & Location

Wye Wood began in Spring 2003 as an innovative partnership initiative developed by the Herefordshire Sustain Project, a project hosted by Small Woods, looking at how local woodlands could contribute to health improvement in Herefordshire. The initial project partners and concept have developed in to the programme we see today, working across the County with participants referred from the Health, Education and Probation services.

Wye Wood activities range from walking to coppicing and creating coppice craft items. In order to establish progression routes for participants a Wye Wood Social Enterprise is being developed

Objectives:

- To help improve the health and lifestyles of hard-to-reach and at risk groups in Herefordshire through the provision of signposted or referred placements in local woodlands.
- To help participants to access healthier lifestyles, increased levels of rehabilitation, training and employment opportunities.
- To create employment and volunteering opportunities for participants through contract work in local woodlands and producing and selling wood products.

Actions:

- Provision of 2 woodland health days per week based in 2 woodland sites (Aconbury & Wigmore Rolls (FC)). Activities include coppicing and woodland crafts.
- Provision of a programme of 16 monthly easily accessible woodland walks. Participants referred through the health service are offered 1-1 support to attend the walks programme.
- Opportunities for 14-16 year olds to join the woodland activity days as part of the school curriculum.
- Development of a progression route into a small social enterprise for volunteers to gain work experience in woodland work and to make and sell woodland products.

Achievements:

- Commitment from Herefordshire Mental Health Service to offer Wye Wood as a recognized service provider for long term mental health patients.
- Contract between Amey (Management Agents for Herefordshire Council) & Wye Wood Social Enterprise to lay a local hedge. This work has been undertaken by a paid supervisor and a team of volunteers who have gained hedge laying skills while with the project.

GROWING OUR FUTURE

WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL
FORESTRY FRAMEWORK

Background:

The Wye Wood Project began in spring 2003, as a partnership initiative developed by the Herefordshire Sustain Project under two of its ambitions:

Health and Well-being - to encourage better, more frequent use of woodland.

Community and Education - Developing social forestry initiatives encouraging healthier lifestyles.

From its tentative beginnings when a small but enthusiastic partnership saw the potential in what was trying to be achieved; Wye Wood has become an impressive example of how to tackle the many health and social challenges associated with rurally disadvantaged communities.

Quotes:

"The Wye Wood experience is, I think, without exception, a positive one for every body I have referred". (Theresa Mason, Occupational Therapist CMHT)

"Wye Wood is useful for helping patients who are needing help fitting in or reintegrating with society, whether through mental health or other reasons. It offers another option for us & I think may help avoid medication & medicalisation of problems" (Simon Lennane, GP, Herefordshire PCT)

Partners:

Steering Group

- Small Woods
- Herefordshire PCT
- Herefordshire Council
- Forestry Commission
- West Mercia Probation

Current Funders (March 2010)

- Herefordshire PCT
- Lloyds TSB Foundation for England and Wales
- BIG Lottery
- NEXUS
- Individual Herefordshire Schools
- Income to Social Enterprise

WMRFF Objectives:

Main Theme & Others

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| HW1: | To maximize the use of woodland and forestry to deliver a healthier region (both physically and spiritually). |
| HW2: | To develop further links between woodland green space and health. |
| ELS 1 & 2 | To increase public knowledge of woodland and forestry by education and raising awareness. To maintain the woodland and forestry workforce and encourage new entrants |
| FSI 4 | To develop a programme of specific initiatives for hard-to-reach groups. |
| FSI 5 | To encourage woodland owners to develop access initiatives for excluded groups. |

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