

The Cart Shed, Herefordshire, England



A social enterprise providing woodland-based health and wellbeing services in the West Midlands

This case study is one of a set written as part of a Forest Research project. Some case studies are written by the community group, others by researchers who visited and interviewed group members, but they have all been validated and endorsed by the community groups.

Forest Research developed a standard method for describing the case studies, outlined in Lawrence and Ambrose-Oji, 2013 "A framework for sharing experiences of community woodland groups" Forestry Commission Research Note 15 (available from www.forestry.gov.uk/publications).

The case study comprises three parts:

1. The **Group Profile** provides essential information about the form and function of the community woodland group. Profiles were prepared following the methodology
2. The **Change Narrative** which documents key moments in the evolution of the community woodland group with a particular focus on the evolution of engagement and empowerment
3. The **Engagement and Impacts Timeline** documents milestones in the development of the community woodland group, its woodland and any assumed or evidenced impacts.

The case studies collectively provide a resource which documents the diversity and evolution of community woodland groups across Scotland, Wales and England. The method ensures that the case studies are consistent and can be compared with each other. We welcome further case studies to add to this growing resource.

For further information, and for the detailed case study method, please contact:

Bianca Ambrose-Oji (Bianca.Ambrose-Oji@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)

For further information about this case study, please contact:

Katie@thecartshed.co.uk or info@thecartshed.co.uk

The Cart Shed, Devereux Wootton, Norton Canon, Herefordshire HR4 8QN

1. Group profile

Woodland: Highmoor Wood
Map ref: SO 318 526
Webpage: <http://www.thecartshed.co.uk/>
Date of profile: August 2012
Resources: site visit, face-to-face interview

1. Institutional context (in August 2012)	
1.1 Ownership of the woodland(s)	<p>Highmoor Wood is part of the Newport (Nieuport) House estate which is now in private ownership. The Cart Shed also has use of the 18th Century walled garden at Newport House. A farm a few miles to the southeast of the estate and other woodland in private ownership by other owners are also used as settings for the Cart Shed’s work. However, at the time of writing the majority of the activities were being undertaken in Highmoor Wood.</p> <p>Classification of tenure: Informal agreement (private)</p>
1.2 Access and use rights to the woodland(s)	<p>There is no public access to the woodland. It is private property. The Cart Shed has agreed use rights with the owners.</p>
1.3 Regulations/ responsibilities affecting the woodland(s)	<p>The Cart Shed is bound by the conditions of use agreed with the woodland owner. The woodland owners may be constrained by the conditions linked to any woodland grants that may have been secured, felling conditions, and to H&S legislation.</p>

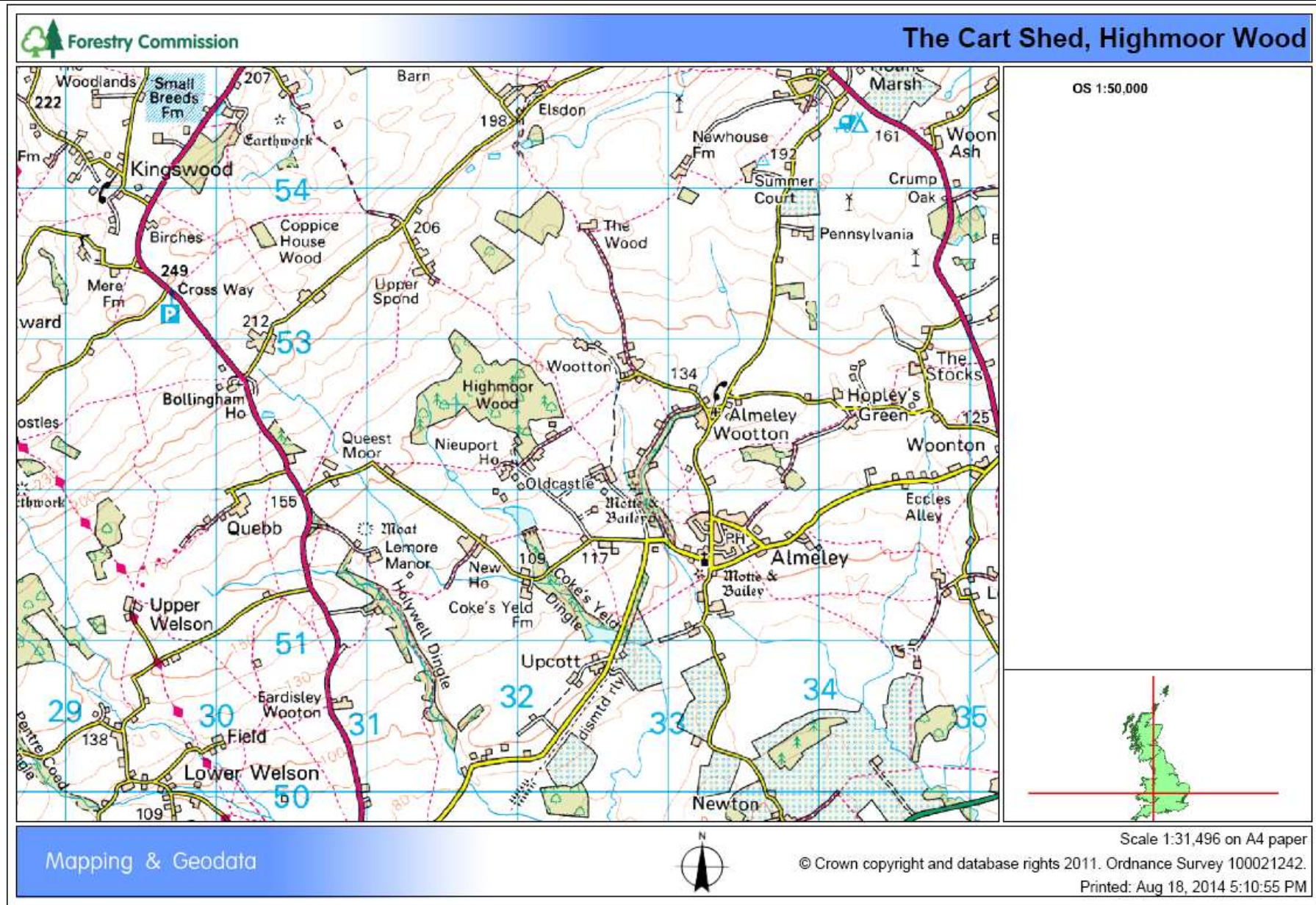
2. Internal organisation of the group/enterprise	
2.1 Group members, representation and decision making	The Cart Shed is a social enterprise that aims to provide woodland-based services that increase the health and wellbeing of service users in the local area. It works with vulnerable groups and individuals across Herefordshire and the Welsh Borders. There is a particular interest in improving mental health. A group of four Directors manage the Cart Shed and are the key players in decision making, although the woodland owners, members of the wider community and the individuals taking part in the activities on offer have some influence in shaping how and what the Cart Shed does.
2.2 Communication and learning processes	The Directors of the Cart Shed and the leaders of the activities undertake formal evaluation processes of activity and project outcomes, as well as informal evaluation of the Cart Shed's performance and development, all of which supports learning within the organisation and between contributors.
2.3 Structure and legal status	The Cart Shed established itself as a Community Interest Company (CIC) limited by guarantee in December 2009. There are four Directors who are responsible for the overall direction and management of the enterprise. The ethos of the CIC is to provide services that contribute to improving individual health and wellbeing, particularly of the most vulnerable sections of society. Classification of legal form: Company Limited by Guarantee - Community Interest Company
2.4 Regulations/ responsibilities affecting the group/ enterprise	No particular responsibilities were noted that affect the groups working and decision making.
2.5 Forest management objectives and planning procedures	The woodland properties in which the Cart Shed operates may or may not have formal management plans. Consultation with the woodland owners ensures that the activities undertaken in the woodland do not impact negatively on the owner's woodland management objectives. Overall aim of plan: Conservation and productive management

<p>2.6 Implementing the woodland management plan</p>	<p>Volunteers and participants in Cart Shed projects and activities undertake work that contributes positively to the owners' objectives for the woodland, but there is no explicit implementation of any woodland management plan.</p>
<p>2.7 Business/ operating model and sustainability</p>	<p>The Cart Shed business is designed to support the Directors as well as provide the range of benefits important to the overall ethos of the enterprise. The aims of the social enterprise are: <i>To be the first choice provider of rural skills therapy in the West Midlands. To enhance the social integration, health and well-being of vulnerable and disadvantaged people in a beautiful, safe and supported environment.</i></p> <p>Services and products traded Currently the main product is outdoor activities in the woodland as a form of "ecotherapy" which the Cart Shed call "rural skills therapy" for individual participants dealing with mental health issues.</p> <p>Market The market for products and services is the West Midlands, the area within travelling distance of the woodland, as well as health authorities and local authorities willing to provide funding for clients to take up these opportunities or include them in the options available through personal health budgets.</p> <p>Marketing The website, newsletters, social networks and programmes linked with health provision all contribute to the marketing mix.</p> <p>The annual income of the CIC runs at about £10k. Whilst a large proportion of this comes from grant funding and charitable giving, the plan is to develop a more market based income strategy.</p>
<p>2.8 Benefit distribution rules</p>	<p>The benefits generated by the Cart Shed are financial and public. Modelled as a social enterprise, financial benefits help sustain the livelihoods of some of the staff and associates running health interventions. Benefits accrue to the individuals who take part in the educational and wellbeing activities that are organised by the Cart</p>

	Shed.
3. External linkages	
3.1 Partnerships and agreements	None at the time of visiting.
3.2 Associations	The Cart Shed has links with a number of national and regional associations including, the Small Woods Association. There are strong relationships with Herefordshire Mental Health team & Public Health.
4. Resources	
4.1 Forest/woodland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Moor Wood is a 40 hectare ancient semi-natural woodland with a hazel coppice understory with some more modern mixed plantation on ancient woodland. • Access is via the private road to the house and unmetalled forestry tracks • The site sits on freely draining slightly acid loamy soils • The species mix over the site is dominated by ash and oak. The slopes fall from north-west to south-east, and is drained by a minor tributary of the River Wye • Classification of woodland type: Broadleaved with coppice • Biodiversity on site has not been surveyed • Newport House and gardens are listed on English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England
4.2 Woodland and group funding sources	The Cart Shed aims to be a sustainable enterprise so looks to fund itself through its enterprise activities. Some funding comes with clients using the mental health services through their personal budgets.

4.3 Knowledge, skills, human and social capital	The Directors and other volunteers involved in the Cart Shed have an extensive array of skills in woodland and land based management and conservation, outdoor education, events management, and nature-based art. The Chief Executive was previously involved in the Wye Wood project which undertook similar work tackling rural social deprivation in rural Herefordshire and South Shropshire.
--------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

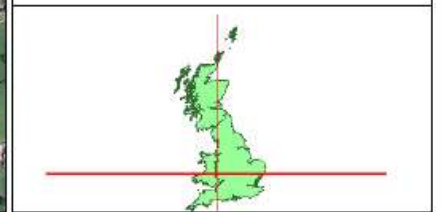
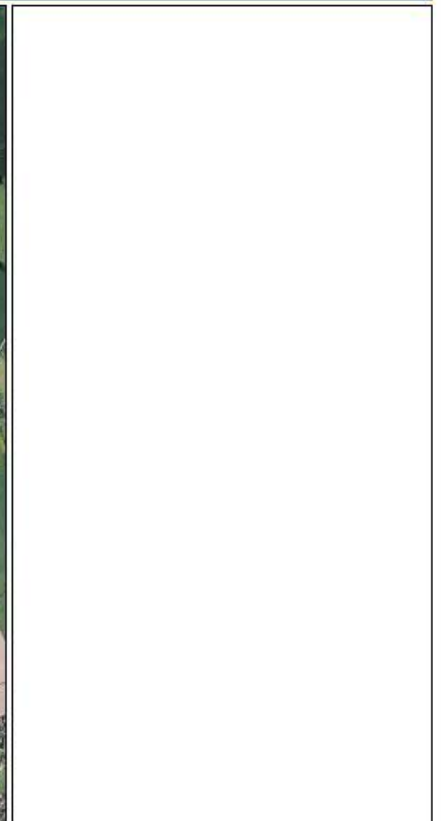
THE CART SHED



THE CART SHED



The Cart Shed, Highmoor Wood



Mapping & Geodata



Scale 1:15,748 on A4 paper
© Crown copyright and database rights 2011. Ordnance Survey 100021242.
Printed: Aug 18, 2014 5:33:14 PM

2. Change Narrative

1. Group History. Moments of change, motivations and engagement

The Cart Shed was at a fairly early stage of development and at a point of change and expansion at the time of visit so the change narrative relates part of the story. There are two strands which contribute to the establishment of the enterprise. One of the founders of the Cart Shed had been offering visits to this farm for schools and other groups for over 10 years. Having understood the potential that bringing people into the outdoors and natural contexts could have in educational and health terms, the chance to provide additional opportunities for people to engage with the outdoors were explored.

The Cart Shed was established as a **social enterprise** community interest company (CIC) as a vehicle to do this at the end of 2009. Between 2003 and 2010 the Wye Wood project was also operating in Herefordshire and the West Midlands. This was a project delivered by the Small Woods Association, which ran between 2003 and 2011. It had a range of activities including health and wellbeing work supported by a Health Development Worker (HDW), as well as other audience-led programmes of activities, such as 'Walking for Health', coppice workshops, exercise and walking programmes and workshops. It was funded by various partners including the Forestry Commission.

As that project came to an end, a new mechanism of delivering similar educational and health outcomes based on rural skills training and time spent in natural settings was sought by one of the project leaders. This brought another Director into The Cart Shed, providing additional perspectives and networks to help turn The Cart Shed's vision into a reality. Using woodland settings was part of the Cart Shed's offer from the outset. Increasing demand for activities in woodland contexts meant The Cart Shed outgrew the original area of woodland used.

The opportunity to use Highmoor Wood came as a result of a change in ownership of the estate from Local Authority to a private owner. The new owners have a philanthropic attitude to their involvement in the community, and were looking for ways to support environmental and social causes. The Cart Shed's social aims clearly aligned with those of the owners, and involvement in the **active management** of woodlands being an implicit rather than explicit aim. The founding Directors have a keen interest

in finding new methods to revive woodland culture, as well as looking for ways to build connections between communities and the local landscape.

There was also an understanding that developing a direct and active partnership between community, landowners and other land managers would be most likely to develop goods and services demanded by local markets and providing a route to sustainability for the CIC as well as for local woods and landholdings. Late on in 2011 the individual leading the restoration of the walled garden joined the Directors and provided The Cart Shed with additional opportunities for the development of courses and other health focused interventions. By the middle of 2012 when the field visit was undertaken, there were plans to develop opportunities for “friends of” The Cart Shed or other interested parties to be able to **volunteer** around some of the activities the CIC were developing.

2. Challenges, barriers and opportunities for change: Key issues in evolution

Facilitating factors

- The **previous experience and skills of the Directors and staff** of the Cart Shed providing a similar service through an funded project
- **Ownership**, by the original Directors, of the farm and woodland originally used to establish the Cart Shed’s delivery and operating model
- The support of a **philanthropic woodland owner**. In the early stage of the development of the enterprise the woodland owners have provided use of the woodland site at Newport House at no cost, and have supported the establishment of a number of bursaries to allow clients to use the Cart Shed’s services.

Barriers and challenges

- Variations and difficulties in **accessing the personal budgets and other forms of health funding** supporting clients using the Cart Shed’s services
- **Establishing a market** for a wider portfolio of service products in a rural location that is relatively difficult to reach

3. Evolution of income

No information

4. Woodland history and change: Benefits and impacts before group involvement

Time Period	Owner/Manager	Objectives / Benefits (and evidence)	Major operations	Access and use rights
Up to 1998	Herefordshire County Council	Hereford County Council bought Nieuport Estate in 1917, to establish a tuberculosis sanatorium. After WWII the house and gardens were leased to the Latvian National Council for use as a Convalescent Home for Latvian Nationals in Britain.	Unknown	Unknown
1999/2001	Private owner	The Local Authority sold the house and part of the grounds through a development company. Parts of the estate outbuildings were developed and leased as flats. The main house and grounds and some associated buildings were put up for sale in 1999.	Unknown	Unknown

5. Woodland history and change: Benefits and impacts since group involvement

Time Period	Owner/Manager	Objectives / Benefits (and evidence)	Major operations	Access and use rights
2010	Private owner	Provision of rural skills therapy to individuals with specific health conditions and educational needs	None	Informal use agreement with land owner for

6. Future plans

The plan of the Directors' is to increase the portfolio of activities that the Cart Shed offers. This could include extending activities in the walled garden. This will move the CIC towards greater sustainability, and, also extend the reach of the enterprise further into communities within reach of the woods that The Cart Shed use.

3. Engagement and impacts timeline

Year	Event	ENGAGEMENT	Reasons	Changes/ Impacts and outcomes Social (evidence)	Changes/ Impacts and outcomes Woodland (evidence)	Changes/ Impacts and outcomes Financial/ Economic (evidence)
2009/2010	Highmoor Wood made available to The Cart Shed	GROUP (i.e. CIC) FORMATION	Development of sustainable model to deliver rural skills based interventions and therapies	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline