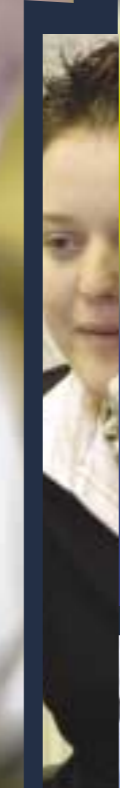




FIVE YEARS OF ENTERPRISE CREATION



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Case study 4

SUSTAINABILITY TAKES ROOT

Enterprise: Whispering Wood coppice
Established by: Whaley Thorns & Langwith Village Company

Named by pupils at Whaley Thorns Primary School, the Whispering Wood has transformed a piece of derelict wasteland into an attractive environmental park and coppice, yielding renewable crops of willow for basket making, garden screens and plant climbers.

The site had been derelict for over a decade since the demolition of housing, but problems with fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour have been eradicated since the project opened in 2002, providing access to a local country park and recreational space for residents.

Funding for woodlands reclamation worth £74,000 was secured by the village company from Emda (East Midlands Development Agency), and the VCP was instrumental both in sourcing and capturing funding, and in project management.

The willow will be sold to local arts and crafts projects, with income recycled in the project.

As well as providing residents with a relaxing, safe and tidy walk through area, the coppice serves as a haven for wildlife.

Contact

Whispering Wood
c/o Whaley Thorns & Langwith Village Company
Village Company House
Langwith Main Road
Langwith
Nottinghamshire NG20 9BH
T: 01623 748492

PIPELINE PROJECTS

CARE BEGINS AT HOME

Enterprise: Village Companies Care Co-operative
To be established by: VCP

The VCP is to establish a new social enterprise to provide high quality care services to vulnerable people in their own homes, across the Meden Valley.

Thanks to initial funding worth £52,000 from Social Enterprise East Midlands, the business is expected to create 30 or more jobs and training opportunities by addressing unmet needs in existing local care provision identified through a feasibility survey.

Changes in health service provision combined with an ageing local population mean there is likely to be a growing need to support elderly and vulnerable people in their own homes.

The enterprise (which will operate as a co-operative) will enhance the quality of life of older and potentially vulnerable residents.

Initially the focus will be on providing generic personal and practical care, which will develop in time into intensive care packages.

Because the village companies already work across north Nottinghamshire and north Derbyshire, they are well-placed to reach local people with a potential interest in becoming full or part-time carers.

Their established links with local people and community groups puts the co-operative in a strong position to market its services and to recruit, train and retain staff.

Offering good rates of pay, it will be managed openly and transparently, promoting democratic governance.

Forecast to become financially self-sustaining in its third year of operation,

the enterprise will share surplus profits between the employees of the co-operative and the village companies for the benefit of the community.

Mentoring support was provided by another social enterprise, Loughborough-based Shepshed Carers Ltd, through the SEEM/Equal-funded initiative.

Covering governance, business planning, charging structures, staffing and employment issues, this proved invaluable throughout the set-up process.

JUST THE BUSINESS

Enterprise: Warsop Enterprise Centre
To be established by: WAVES

WAVES plans to purchase and renovate a 1920s built workshop premises in Burns Lane, Warsop, reclaiming this brownfield site to create a 21st century business incubator resource known as Warsop Enterprise Centre.

By renovating and remodelling the facility, WAVES intends to provide modern workspace (comprising offices and workshops) for at least 21 business units, attracting indigenous business start ups and promoting inward investment.

Around 50 good quality employment opportunities will be created or safeguarded at the centre, which will also raise skills and create training for local people.

Rental or licence terms will be flexible, encouraging fledgling enterprises and start-up businesses. An 'incubation' office will provide additional support, training and advice through partnerships with local providers.

Research indicates that projected income levels will enable the business (a limited liability company wholly owned by WAVES) to become self-sustaining within three years. The village company will recycle surpluses in the community.

BALANCING THE BOOKS

Enterprise: Village Companies Support Services
To be established by: VCP

This new business will provide a dedicated financial and administrative support service to each of the village companies, community organisations, small to medium businesses and social enterprises across the Meden Valley.

Wholly owned by three of the village companies, its services will include:

- ❑ computerised bookkeeping and accounts
- ❑ VAT returns
- ❑ payroll
- ❑ budget forecasting/analysis
- ❑ advice and support re: financial systems
- ❑ ICT support and advice

Expected to be fully sustainable by year three, the business will create two jobs.

WHAT ARE VILLAGE COMPANIES?

Village companies typically share the legal identity and structure of an Industrial & Provident Society, combining charitable status with trading capacity. They may alternatively take the form of a company limited by guarantee. Community-led, they can own and manage assets, employ staff, recruit volunteers, manage accommodation, and run social enterprises. Each is managed by a voluntary board of directors and is fully accountable to its members.

Their prime objectives are to provide a focus for economic and community regeneration, to create employment and training, and to improve local services and amenities.

OUR VIEW

"The creation of WAVES Home Maintenance would never have been achieved without the support of the VCP team who have been there all the way with practical business advice including accessing funding, preparing business plans and seeking out contracts."

John Allin, Chairman of WAVES

"Elmton and Creswell Village Company (ECVC) is grateful to the VCP team for the professional help it has provided in the four years since the company was formed. The help has fallen into two phases. Initially ECVC was clear about its objectives but needed help and guidance with procedures to convert its wishes to concrete reality.

"A number of bodies helped here but a substantial role was played by the VCP. During this second phase, ECVC has received and is continuing to receive valuable help from the staff at VCP, who have contributed greatly to our progress."

Brian Kirsop, Chairman of Elmton & Creswell Village Company

"Without the help and support given by the VCP team, it would have been a great deal more difficult if not impossible for the company to achieve its goals and help in the regeneration of Whaley Thorns and Langwith."

Ken Harwood, Vice Chair of Whaley Thorns & Langwith Village Company

"The Handyperson Service we provide is really being appreciated by local people, especially the older vulnerable people who now account for approximately 95% of our work.

"We are now expanding the business and in addition to taking on a second handyperson, are looking to train and employ a younger person through an Apprenticeship Scheme - hopefully bridging the gap between young and old!

"Through the Equal Mentoring Project and organised by the VCP team, we have been able to visit Orbit Housing Association who offer a similar service. This was extremely useful and we've identified many areas of good practice and innovation which we are pursuing."

Mick Overton, Maintenance Manager, WAVES Home Maintenance

THANK YOU

LHA, the VCP and the village companies themselves are grateful to the following project partners for their invaluable support.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Active Communities Unit ❑ Alliance SSP ❑ Bolsover District Council ❑ Coalfields Regeneration Trust ❑ Community Fund ❑ Derbyshire County Council ❑ Elmton & Creswell Village Forum | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Emda ❑ Equal project ❑ European Social Fund ❑ GOEM ❑ Heritage Lottery Fund ❑ Langwith Society ❑ Mansfield District Council ❑ Meden Valley Partnership ❑ Neighbourhood Renewal Fund ❑ Nottinghamshire County Council ❑ SEEM ❑ Sir John Eastwood Trust ❑ Sustainable Communities |
|---|--|

CONTACT: Community Development Manager, LHA, 24 De Montfort St, Leicester LE1 7GB
T: 0116 257 6700 E: itdept@lha.org.uk www.lha.org.uk



An innovative social enterprise initiative to support community-led regeneration in former coalfields communities across north Nottinghamshire and north Derbyshire, is helping local people build brighter futures.

The Village Companies Project (VCP), launched in 1999 by LHA (Leicester Housing Association) in partnership with local people, local authorities and other agencies, has celebrated its fifth birthday with confirmation that, to date:

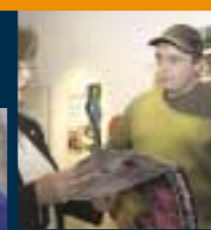
- six community-led village companies have been established
- 25+ new jobs have been created in target communities
- over £1m of external funding has been captured
- significant community assets are being developed/secured
- an increasingly diverse range of enterprises is being sustained
- a mentoring programme developed through the Equal project is inspiring a new generation of enterprise start-ups

Developed to drive social, economic and physical regeneration in line with local priorities, the village companies are restoring confidence and entrepreneurship to communities hard hit by the collapse of traditional coal and textile industries.

Led by volunteer directors (a significant majority of whom are drawn from the area), each village company is working with residents, public sector interests, voluntary organisations and private businesses to springboard the development of new social enterprises.

Key outcomes include local job and training creation, enhanced services and amenities, and environmental improvements within these Meden Valley communities.

Instrumental in the initial formation of the village companies, the VCP provides guidance and practical assistance to the village company directors as and when required, and supports them in developing and sustaining new start-up businesses.



practise, providing training and creating jobs, and supporting community groups and organisations in developing ideas into social enterprises.

A key launch event in 2004 organised by the VCP, entitled 'Blood on the T-shirt', saw presenters with hands-on experience of enterprise creation host a day-long learning session for would-be entrepreneurs from across the Meden Valley. The event kick-started a programme of **local mentoring** which is directly benefiting both the village companies themselves and existing and emerging social enterprises within target communities.



- For example:
- Limestone House (see case study 2) received support from Whitchurch Heritage Centre with operational management issues, and from Rawsthorne Marketing in developing a marketing strategy
 - WAVES received ongoing support and guidance from the Genesis Centre in Alfreton, for its plans to develop the Warsop Enterprise Centre (see pipeline projects)

The programme is being funded by a £50,000 Equal/European Regional Development Fund grant from SEEM, matched by LHA.



ENTERPRISE IN ACTION

Case study 1

HOME WORK PAYS OFF

Enterprise: WAVES Home Maintenance Ltd
Established by: WAVES (Warsop & Villages Enterprise Society)

A new enterprise created to provide a range of affordable home maintenance and DIY services, has secured work from over 200 clients in and around Warsop within months of being formed.

WAVES Home Maintenance Ltd is a community-owned 'limited liability company' which was launched in November 2004 thanks to a £20,000 grant from Mansfield District Council, following a successful six month pilot.

With an office base in Warsop, the enterprise has so far created two full time, and two part time jobs.

Services include:

- joinery
- plumbing
- gardening
- decorating



Work has been commissioned by home owners and tenants in and around Warsop parish and the surrounding villages, and by agencies such as Meden Valley Sure Start (for whom the business installed child safety equipment), Age Concern, Jigsaw, and local schools.

The area has experienced high levels of property disrepair arising from absentee landlords, issues around affordability, and a historic lack of investment in housing stock.

It is expected that by delivering a reliable, accessible and affordable service, the enterprise will:

- create further jobs and training opportunities
- improve housing conditions
- make high quality maintenance accessible to low income households
- provide older and vulnerable people in particular with a safe and trusted service

The business is on target to become self-sustaining in its third year of operation, and surplus profits will be reinvested in the business or gift aided to WAVES for the benefit of the community.

The VCP supported the creation of the company, through research, business planning, and funding capture. The success of the enterprise will act as a template for WAVES in the creation and management of further community-owned social enterprises locally.

Contact

Maintenance Manager
WAVES Home Maintenance Ltd
c/o 41 High Street, Market Warsop
Nottinghamshire NG20 0AB
T: 01623 845371



Case study 2

HUB OF THE COMMUNITY

Enterprise: Limestone House, Creswell
Established by: Elmtown & Creswell Village Company

Limestone House was created in 2004, to provide a dynamic new resource for local people on the site of three buildings (two of which were derelict and fire-damaged) in the centre of the village.

Thanks to grants from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, the Heritage Lottery Fund and others, the buildings have been adapted and refurbished to form modern and welcoming facilities for the community, including:

- a coffee shop
- a nearly new shop
- a heritage orientation point and display
- training facilities
- advice centre

Open to all, six days a week, Limestone House (which is run as a social enterprise), has sustained a full time job for the centre manager with two part-time assistants, and created further opportunities for one part-time development worker, and a growing team of 15 or more volunteers.

Training on offer includes:

- basic skills
- creative writing
- desk top publishing
- digital photography
- floral arts
- food hygiene
- foreign languages
- genealogy
- IT
- painting and drawing
- Tai Chi
- working with children

Over 100 enrolments were accepted by Chesterfield College for the centre's first round of courses, which were devised following consultation with local businesses.



Case study 3

PRESSING AHEAD

Enterprise: Langwith Village Press
Established by: Whaley Thorns & Langwith Village Company

The Langwith Village Press was transferred from the Langwith Society to the Whaley Thorns & Langwith Village Company in 2001. The business has been developed by the village company, which now owns it, into a thriving enterprise that has outgrown its original premises.



Limestone House is equipped with two IT suites and 20 personal computers, opening up online learning to the local community. Free and confidential advice about financial, legal and benefits issues is also available on request.

The heritage display describes the unique magnesian limestone region in which Creswell is centrally located, and which has given rise to the world-famous Creswell Crags, local abbeys and parklands, and the wool and mining industries.

History is brought alive, with the help of an interactive touch screen computer, and the venue serves as an orientation point for a 'walk through history' from the remote Ice Ages to present times, in the area around the village.

A 'nearly new' shop offers a wide range of quality second goods at affordable prices, including clothing, toys and books.

Turnover has increased very substantially since the move to new premises, and profits (typically £200-300 per week) are reinvested in the village company.

Funding has recently been secured from Meden Valley Town Centre Group to build a conservatory, allowing the expansion of the coffee bar.

LHA and the VCP supported the development of the facility, which has also benefited from ongoing mentoring support from the Equal project.

Contact

Centre Manager
Limestone House, 50-54 Elmtown Road
Creswell, Worksop S80 4JE
T: 01909 724061



Leicester. Clients include Bolsover District Council, LHA, businesses and community organisations. Surpluses are reinvested in the business or the local community.

Support and mentoring has been provided through the VCP and its partnership with SEEM, via Equal funding.

Located on the corner of New Scott Street and Main Street, the new print shop is adjacent to a new village fish and chip shop, also owned and managed by Whaley Thorns & Langwith Village Company, which will create up to five more local jobs, providing fast food for residents of this and surrounding communities.

The VCP helped secure over £250,000 of grant funding for the combined chip shop/print shop development, which is being delivered by LHA (in partnership with Newlife Regeneration Construction Ltd) as development agent on behalf of the village company.

Contact

Langwith Village Press
c/o Whaley Thorns & Langwith Village Company
Village Company House
Langwith Main Road
Langwith
Nottinghamshire NG20 9BH
T: 01623 748492 >>>



Scheduled to relocate to brand new purpose-built premises in 2005 (thanks to funding from the Coalfields Regeneration Trust, Coalfield Alliance SSP and the BIG Lottery Fund) the enterprise has taken the opportunity to invest in the latest large-format digital printing technology.

With the capacity to produce high quality, full colour, lithographic, foil and digital printing, the business produces a full range of design and print work, from business stationery to brochures, promotional items to draw tickets, website design to sales mailers.

It provides three jobs for local people (including one trainee), and is winning work from as far afield as Grantham and