



KindleWoods CIC Social Audit Report Jan 2018- Jan 2019

KindleWoods CIC is passionate about combining our three values; nature, community and wellbeing to create projects which are both environmentally sustainable and good for people. Last year, we ran four main activities designed around this; we harvested coppice as a local renewable resource, we ran woodland wellbeing programmes with adults experiencing mental health challenges, we ran heritage workshops at events and festivals, and we trained up volunteers to help us do all three.

Woodland Wellbeing

For a further detailed assessment of the effectiveness of our woodland wellbeing programmes on mental health, please see the independent report that research consultant Melody Clarke from Beware of the Bull CIC produced in January 2019, included at the end of this report.

KindleWoods ran 8 Woodland Wellbeing programmes ranging in length from 3-6 weeks at four different woodland sites in North Yorkshire with adults experiencing a range of mild to moderate mental health challenges, including those experiencing depression, anxiety, borderline personality disorder, self-harm, grief, anorexia, isolation, low self-esteem, as well as a range of physical challenges including chronic fatigue, heart conditions, arthritis, and fibromyalgia for example. We also ran woodland wellbeing taster sessions (for individuals wishing to trial a session) and campfire socials (for those who had already experienced a programme). Combined with the woodland wellbeing programmes, 84 places were filled by participants. Feedback was collated from a survey sample of 41 participants, with 100% of participants surveyed describing the programmes or sessions as positively supporting their wellbeing. Examples of qualitative written feedback included (names changed to protect identity);



What did you find most useful?

"It reminds you about the positivity in the world, and your abilities, it makes you realise what you are capable of and that you can do more than you think." *Jane, August 2018*

"Having something to look forward to. An exciting reason to leave the house. An opportunity to meet new people. Just being outside" *Susie, Nov 2018*

"It's the thing about face your fear and do it anyway, so things I've felt nervous about doing, like the bow drill or lighting birch bark, having the chance to do those made me feel more confident. I'm slowly less fearful about new situations." *Jo, Sept 2018*

"I was able to spend time with other people so I felt less lonely during the week. It also gave me things to think about and be excited about during the week - I spent time at home whittling for example." *George, May 2018*

"It was so calming and promoted a huge sense of wellbeing in the forest setting and with some really lovely, talented people". *John, Sept 2018*



Would you recommend the session to others?

"Yes I would 110% recommend it, even myself the most unsociable hermit, found that being outdoors socialising around a campfire cooking bread, was such an amazing experience" *Jeff, Sept 2018*

"Yes, I do recommend it widely to lots of people, because I think that anyone who is even slightly struggling with mental health issues would benefit." *Jo, Sept 2018*

"Yes definitely, I think they are amazing. This is the second one I have done and loved it as much as the first, if not more." *Julie, Nov 2018*

"Yes!" *Leanne, Nov 2018*

Did the content/subject area support your wellbeing?

"Yes definitely, I loved every minute of it." *Paul, Nov 2018*

“Definitely, they have improved my confidence, doing things I never thought I could have helped me tackle things in other area of my life” *Clare, April 2018*

“100%. I felt great afterwards and even the day after that. The sessions really made me feel free and relaxed.” *Julie, Nov 2018*

“It made me feel good, very positive. I came away feeling very chilled and relaxed. Most days I came home and started doing something more productive... and making walking sticks (...something I've started doing at home). I'm feeling a bit more positive about life in general.” *Bill, Jun 2018*

“You reminded me there are still good people! I am really happy to have been on the course, a bit taken aback and surprised by how much I enjoyed it and how approachable I found people. I will remember it fondly.” *Jen, Sept 2018*

What was it like for you to be out in nature?

“I liked it, it was nice. Although a bit of a pain when you have hayfever! It forced me to go out as I normally wouldn't have done it unless I had a reason to go.” *Jenny, Jun 2018*

“Great. You tend not to do it; it's always there and available but until you have an organised structure you don't actually do it. I enjoyed the constructive work, and socialising and doing mindfulness in the woods – you tend to look at nature and realise you can make it part of your life more and learn more about the woods more. I would like to do future volunteering.” *Bill, Jun 2018*

“I find being outside really good. It's peaceful. I felt calmer and more relaxed.” *Sally, Jun 2018*

“It's so important I've realised - I feel so different spending time out in the woods.” *Anne, Sept 2018*

“Perfect, it is where I feel most content. The place was very comforting as well because of the small but open size” *Dan, Sept 2018*

Woodland Management

KindleWoods undertook woodland management work in 3 woodlands across North Yorkshire, clearing brash, thinning trees and building dead hedges. Our biggest project was supporting hazel coppice restoration; we coppiced stools covering half an acre, largely with volunteers using hand tools. The timber harvested has been used to make hedge stakes, stool legs, structures, mallets in our workshops and firewood.



Volunteer development

Over the course of the year we have worked with 36 volunteers, on our board, as woodland wellbeing assistants, coppicing volunteers and supporting our workshops at events. Many have become volunteers as a result of attending our woodland wellbeing programmes. Volunteers have received training through external providers, including one attending bushcraft CPD, two attending adult safeguarding training, 2 attending 2-day outdoor first aid and 3 attending a 2-day hedge laying course. In January, 5 volunteers went on coppicing training with Ben Law at Prickly Nut Wood.

Volunteer Case Studies

In their own words, one of our volunteers describes the journey they experienced from starting on a woodland wellbeing programme two years previously, to becoming a volunteer (featured in Beware of the Bull CIC Evaluation Report).



"I'd been going to a group in the back of a café in Selby, and it was really quite depressing....drab and dreary. There were a lot of people who just went to moan. The mindfulness we did wasn't really doing anything for me, I was only going just to get me out of the house.... I wasn't functioning back then, I wasn't eating, or getting out of bed. Mind suggested the KindleWoods session, so I went along, and the first day I was there, it was like, 'hang on, this is better, this makes sense, this will work' ... being in the woods is great anyway – just being out in nature is just good for your soul. The mindfulness was difficult to do in a meeting room; I was struggling to connect with the moment before, you know – when the moment is drab and dreary, compared to being in the moment when the sunlight is dappling through the trees, and a fire roaring

in front of you. It's like you actually want to be in that moment. And then the practical stuff...it was like, wow I could do something.... which was positive on a whole load of different levels. After being at two of the programmes I become a volunteer. I was making things which someone else found useful – and you realise, I'm not absolutely useless, here's

something I can do, which is useful. At home it'd be like - I'll get up, and I'll do that. You start looking for stuff to do, and you start functioning again. It gives you purpose.

And then the next level up after that, was reinforcing your sense of worth, by being trusted to do stuff, and support others to do it, and you see their sense of achievement. Getting someone else to go 'wow, I can do this, I've never been able to do it! Wow, we got him sorted there – and he already had quite a bit of skill.' It was another level up. You don't notice it at the time, but you start to see yourself differently. Doing the Great Yorkshire Show, helping someone else achieve something in bushcraft, who is already skilled at it, that feels really good. The people who make the effort to go and attend a KindleWoods thing are trying to make things better. Not everyone is who is going to some other course – people just want to moan, and moan about the same things, with no attempt to improve things.



At KindleWoods you are already amongst people who are trying to do something positive. Your attention as well, it's diverted away from that stuff. It's a much more positive space. The good thing about it, is it's like asking people to do things for themselves incidentally – rather than 'this is your medication', 'this is your treatment'. It's 'let's just do this, let's crack on together.' It's not a

doctor-patient relationship, it's 'right – we're going to do this today, and you might find it amazing, but it's okay if you don't.' I'm on a crusade now to talk about mental health. It's still a taboo subject you can't talk about. KindleWoods has helped because it's being around people who have been through similar issues, being able to talk and discuss things openly. Not everyone wants to talk. It's conversations and connections, having understanding, seeing how different people deal with things, in a non-threatening reassuring environment."

Another volunteer describes what volunteering with KindleWoods has meant for them;

"Volunteering with Kindlegoods has taught me not only woodland maintenance techniques and skills such as coppicing, firelighting, along with the making, use and maintenance of appropriate tools but has also taught me a lot about what I have to offer a group of people and what my strengths and weaknesses are. This has helped rebuild my confidence and sense of self-worth which has lead me, with encouragement, guidance and feedback from staff, to rediscover my strengths and abilities enabling me to give even more back to Kindlegoods and its participants."

Workshops at Events and Shows

KindleWoods ran workshops to inspire members of the public in their own skills and what they can make from nature at Deer Shed Festival and the Great Yorkshire Show, teaching a range of traditional craft skills including making stools, mallets, spinning wool and making fire by friction using a bow drill. Much of the wood we used in the workshops had been harvested from the coppice, and we worked with 280 members of the public directly, and approximately 550 in total when including those who watched our demonstrations.



Consultation with Stakeholders

Who we worked with;

Partners

York Mind – as part of the City of York Council Mental Health Activities Programme
Action Towards Inclusion – in the delivery of programmes in Knaresborough
City of York Council – Running programmes throughout the year at Rawcliffe Country Park
Thirsk Community Woodland Group – Running programmes at Pearsons Wood in Thirsk

Project Support

Making Local Woods Work – KindleWoods was one of 50 Woodland Social Enterprises selected for project support and advice nationally from a partnership between the Forestry Commission, Woodland Trust, The Plunkett Foundation, Hill Holt Wood amongst others.

Events

The Great Yorkshire Show – Running the traditional crafts arena in the Forestry Area
Deer Shed Festival – Delivering green wood workshops and bushcraft demonstrations

Funders

School for Social Entrepreneurs – Community Business Trade Up Programme
The Big Lottery - Awards for All
Two Ridings Community Foundation – Allerton Park, Landscape and Cultural Heritage Fund
Tesco - Bags for Life

Throughout the year KindleWoods received written and verbal feedback from participants and volunteers attending programmes and sessions in order to be able to assess and review the effectiveness of the project, examples of which have been detailed earlier in the report. We also commissioned Beware of the Bull CIC to conduct an independent evaluation and interview participants and volunteers. We adapted the programmes based on feedback, including increasing the length of programme duration and creating campfire social sessions which enabled participants to continue to engage with the project beyond the programme. Other stakeholders include landowners, funders and business customers including festival, woodland management and woodland wellbeing clients. We keep in regular contact with each, and adapt our services based on the needs of these stakeholders and the needs of the participants attending the programmes.