



The Wilderness Project submission to Gloucestershire County Council

Proposal for acquisition of the Wilderness Centre by the community.

17th April 2014

Further to our official request for transfer of the Wilderness Centre assets to The Wilderness Project C.I.C. dated 29th January 2013, we hereby submit our final Business Proposal.

We ask that Gloucestershire County Council review its decision to sell the Wilderness Centre as vacant property in favour of Community Asset Transfer to The Wilderness Project CIC. In line with our previous correspondence we are reiterating our request that the County Council should reconsider its intention to sell the centre and instead, include the Wilderness Centre on the list of “Big Community Offer” properties on the grounds that it is a special case.

We believe that we have a strong case for consideration in the light of the following:

1: Capital investment

Our business plan shows that we have capital grants amounting to £300,000. £250,000 of which is ring-fenced for the purpose of refurbishing the buildings. Transfer of the asset can therefore be made in the full knowledge that it will be refurbished and well maintained into the future.

See Appendix 1 for: Recent property survey report.
Appendix 3 for: Funding support.

2: Long-term viability

Our Business plan demonstrates that we will make a trading surplus after two full years of business and that the operation can be fully supported from proven revenue streams. The project is managed by a highly qualified and experienced Board of professionals.

See Appendix 2 for: Five year income and expenditure budget.
Recent market survey findings;
Pen-portraits of current Board members

3: Bridging the revenue funding gap at start-up.

To date we have secured commitments from over thirty local and national businesses and voluntary bodies who have offered financial and other material support. This is more than sufficient to cover any initial shortfall in operational budgets.

In addition we have pledges of support from individual Friends of the Wilderness.

Both this funding support and future grant applications are dependent upon the Project acquiring the land or securing a long-term lease of 25 years or more.

See Appendix 3 for: Lists of sponsors, their pledges and commitments.

4: Real community gains

There are strong social, economic and political dividends accruing from a decision to transfer the Wilderness.

See Appendix 4 for: National and local imperatives for saving the Wilderness,
Meeting the needs of the vulnerable
Community support.

We trust that, in light of the above, the Council will recognise that its original decision to sell the centre was made in reaction to a short-term financial situation. We strongly believe that offering the Wilderness Centre to community investment will ultimately maximise returns to the people of Gloucestershire now and in to the future. We look forward to working with the council to create a lasting legacy for the people of Gloucestershire.

In the end our society will be defined not only by what we create but what we refuse to destroy. (John C Sawhill)

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours faithfully

The Wilderness Project Board of Directors:

Trevor Roach David Garnett
Sally Morley Bob Boulter
Paul Vare Jane Cordier
Yvonne Nason Joe Pace
Martin Bragg

The Wilderness Project CIC
Company No. 8150088
<http://www.thewildernessproject.org.uk>

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The Wilderness Project – Community Asset Transfer Bid

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**The Wilderness Centre
Mitcheldean**

Initial Building Fabric Report

By Adrian Birch Associates
Chartered Building Surveyor

Date of inspection – 7th January 2014

Instructions

Verbal instructions were received on 6th January 2014 to undertake a walk round survey and to report on the general condition of the fabric of the main building and staff building, and to provide a brief schedule of repairs with indicative costs.

Survey report contents:

1. Preambles
2. General description
3. Roofs and rainwater disposal
4. Foundations, walls and openings
5. External structures and components
6. External areas
7. Above and below ground drainage
8. Floors
9. Internal Walls
10. Internal components
11. Finishes
12. Services
13. Summary and recommendations – including a schedule of works based upon information obtained so far with budget sums attached for guidance purposes until such time as a detailed inspection is undertaken.

Estimated budget for further investigations, immediate works and repairs
- £220,000

THE FULL PROPERTY SURVEY IS AVAILABLE FOR INSPECTION

The Wilderness Project C.I.C. - Initial Board Members



DAVID GARNETT (Chair)

BSc (Econ). MA. PhD. FCIH

Lives in St Briavels, Forest of Dean.

Has chaired two housing association boards and chaired Bristol City's Option Appraisal Board. He has worked as a housing consultant to a variety of housing agencies in Britain and overseas and has written extensively on the running of social enterprise businesses, financial management and intergeneration justice. Now retired David was previously the Principal Lecturer in Housing at the University of the West of England. He is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Housing and is currently writing An A-Z of Housing for Palgrave Macmillan.

He is a director of Centigen, a Gloucester based facilities management company.



BOB BOULTER (Vice Chair)

LLb, MSc, MAPM, CISA.

Lives in Coleford, Forest of Dean.

A highly experienced change manager with a commercial risk outlook. 20+ years leadership in Strategic Programme Management, Operational Risk and Audit Management. Bob was Audit Director of Group Operations for the Lloyds Banking Group.

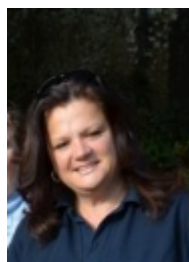


MARTIN BRAGG (Education consultant & schools liaison)

BSc (Hons), PGCE, NPQH

Lives in Dursley, Gloucestershire.

Martin is a Headteacher of a large primary school in Gloucester with over 30 years experience in primary education as a teacher and Headteacher. He started his teaching career in environmental education and worked at The Wilderness Centre between 1980 and 1990. Since then he has worked tirelessly to promote the role of outdoor education in schools.



JANE CORDIER (Fund raiser)

BA (Hons)

Lives in Whitecroft, Forest of Dean.

Currently working as the Community Projects Coordinator for Two Rivers Housing Association.

Jane has 20 years experience as a professional fundraiser and is contributing these skills to The Wilderness Project.



SALLY MORLEY (Deputy Project Director)

BEd (Hons)

Lives in Newnham, Forest of Dean.

Sally previously worked as a teacher at The Wilderness Centre and was also a key member of the Management Team.

Sally is currently self-employed as an Outdoor Education teacher and teacher trainer.



YVONNE NASON (Administration services)

Lives in Coleford, Forest of Dean

Yvonne has recently retired. She has wide experience of working as a Personal Assistant, including PA to the Chief Executive of a charity and PA to the Chairman of a national company.



JOE PACE (Director of resources)

BSc (Hons),

International Commercial Associate. HSBC Bank Plc.

Joe joined the board with his fiancé's encouragement, she comes from Gloucester and attended the Wilderness Centre on an A level Biology field trip in the 90's.

Joe has 10 years' experience in the financial services industry supporting SME businesses achieve their growth aspirations.



TREVOR ROACH (Project Director)

B.Sc (Hons), PGCE, Dip. RSA.

Lives in Ruardean Hill, Forest of Dean.

Trevor is an environmental education consultant and trainer. He was Head of Environmental Education at The Wilderness Centre from 1991 to 2002.

He was then Head of Education and Science at the National Botanic Garden of Wales from 2002 to 2009. Previous charitable board directorships include Plantlife and Botanic Gardens Education Network.



PAUL VARE (Company secretary)

BA. MPhil. PGCE. EdD

Lives in Blakeney, Forest of Dean.

Executive Director / founder of South West Learning for Sustainability Coalition & Senior Lecturer at the University of Gloucestershire. A specialist in Education for Sustainable Development, Paul previously worked for Living Earth Foundation & the International Centre for Conservation Education.

The Wilderness Project Income and Expenditure 2014 – 2019

Expenditure (x£1000)	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Revenue Costs					
Staffing	159	219	252	280	480
Goods and Services	87	107	122	141	220
Capital Costs					
Contingencies-replace - develop	10	50	50	50	50
Start-up	264				
Development programme investment				500	
Totals	520	376	424	971	750
Income (x£1000)					
Schools/colleges - Residentials	120	270	310	325	600
schools/colleges - other income	23	38	54	64	68
Community / other activities	32	62	91	100	150
Grants	235	15	0	0	0
Corporate sponsorship	90	15	0	0	0
Private donations	30	10	0	0	0
Development programme grants,etc.				500	
Carry forward		10	44	75	93
Totals	530	420	499	1064	911
Balance	10	44	75	93	161

Notes:

Income is being projected on a very conservative basis, based on historical trends and takes no account of new income streams.

Income from residential courses has been calculated based on booking fees that are below current market rates - this will help to quickly attract back past customers and to attract new ones.

Sensitivity analysis:

Any reduction in income can be offset by reduction of expenses due to the way in which the business is structured to do this.

All staff costs, provisions, etc are geared to provide for the booking levels in the business plan targets. In year one, staff will be contracted in as and when required. Revenue expenditure will be trimmed to match booking rates.

Additional support for the revenue budget at start-up. As soon as the property is acquired by the Project, fundraising events such as concerts, garden parties and auctions will be held to raise charitable funds to support the revenue budget - to add to the £30K already identified.

Early priority will be given to the development phase - seeking grants and corporate matched funding to develop the site and increase capacity, doubling the numbers of residential courses that can be delivered on the site. The business plan indicates the sum of £500K being available by year 4, with the increased income benefits transmitting into year 5 onwards. The business is not dependent on the development phase or its timing as the business is geared to be self sustaining at the existing capacities and occupancy rates.

Detailed budget figures available upon request

Updated Schools Market Survey December 2013 – January 2014

Analysis

Results of an e-mail survey of schools that had used the Wilderness Centre for three day residential environmental courses in its final year of operating.

Note: some school year groups are big enough to require two booking slots. A cautious estimate of 4 schools requiring a double booking has been applied to the results.

Number of past county school residential users on record	54
Total number of previous users responding to survey	41
Percentage response rate	76%
Schools wanting future residential course booking	38
Estimate of residential course numbers based on responses	42
First year of trading Residential course booking target	31

Response by county District

District	Schools responding	Percentage of total
Forest	15	39%
Gloucester	7	18%
Cheltenham	8	21%
Cotswolds	4	11%
Stroud	3	8%
Tewkesbury	1	3%
Totals	38	100%

Improve resources for your school in 5 minutes!

Spend five minutes to help shape a new Residential Environmental Education Centre for your school to use. **December 2013**

We are sending you this survey as your school has used The Wilderness Centre in Gloucestershire in the past. We need an updated indication of how much value your school might place on a new service based at the Wilderness Centre once we have acquired it from the County Council. We want to invite you to think about **your future needs**. For more information about The Wilderness Project visit this web page:
<http://thewildernessproject.org.uk/#/schools-colleges/4568870407>

Please pass this form on to the staff member or department/s best placed to give a response.

Services that will be offered to your school:

1. Operating as a not-for-profit Charitable Company we will keep fees affordable for primary and secondary schools and we will re-invest all profits into continuous development for the benefit of your pupils now and into the future.
2. We will employ qualified, highly experienced environmental educators, field ecologists, early years practitioners and curriculum development trainers to ensure you get the best service in all aspects of learning out of doors. We will maintain a reputation for best practice.
3. We will work collaboratively with you to create learning programmes that meet your needs both on school trips and learning in and around your school - we will be a dependable support partner now and into the future.

The Wilderness Project provision:

Residential courses

- Specialising in residential courses for pupils, learning in and for the natural environment including woods, meadows and ponds and exploring the natural and industrial heritage of the Royal Forest of Dean.
- KS 1 and 2 curriculum based programmes to support a wide range of subjects and early residential experiences.
- Subject based residential field studies for Key Stage 3 and 4 and A level.
- Using the environment as an innovative trigger for developing skills in science, literacy, poetry, prose, numeracy, information technology, art, music, drama, environmental and sustainable development education and global citizenship.
- Personal and social development courses

Day courses at The Wilderness Centre will include:

Habitat Studies, Anglo Saxon Settlement days, Food and Farming, Sustainable Forestry, exploring environmental and sustainable living themes through a wide curriculum range including: scientific enquiry, poetry, art, and music in nature.

Advisory and training service to schools will include:

Developing school grounds as a better resource for learning and play. Forest Schools support. Growing food in school. CPD in environmental and sustainable development aspects of school improvement. Provision of an advice service for outdoor learning skills, resources and safety.

Improve resources for your school in 5 minutes!

Please answer these few questions, copy the completed form and Email it back to us at : info@thewildernessproject.org.uk

Your details:

School	
Your contact name	
Your staff role / position	

Questions:

1. Would you consider using this centre for a residential course in the future if: (indicate with X)	Yes	No
a. it was good value for money		
b. it had excellent staffing		
c. had the highest standards of safety, hygiene, nutrition, etc.		
d. offered a menu of programmes that met your curriculum needs		

2. Would you consider using the Wilderness Centre for Day visits?	Yes	No

3. Would you use this service for school based curriculum advice, support and training in all aspects of environmental and sustainable development education?	Yes	No

4. How likely might your school be to use our provision at some point in the future on a scale of 0 to 5. 0 = never, 1 = very unlikely, 2 = unlikely, 3 = possibly, 4 = probably, 5 = definitely	0 - 5
a. A residential course trip with a class or year group	
b. A day visit with a class or year group	
c. An advisory or staff training visit to your school by Wilderness staff	

	Yes	No
5a. Have you used The Wilderness Centre services in the past?		

5b. If yes please mark with X which services you have used :	
a. Residential course visit	
b. Day visit to Plump Hill or Wilderness Centres with a class of pupils	
c. Attended a staff training course at The Wilderness or Plump Hill Centres	
d. Wilderness Staff came to my school to give advice, run a training or teaching event	
e. Other : (describe)	

<p>Please copy this document once answered and e-mail it back to: info@thewildernessproject.org.uk . writing School Survey in the Subject box. For more information visit our website - www.thewildernessproject.org.uk THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME. December 2013</p>
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Funding Support – corporate and private sponsors

All funding support is dependent upon the Wilderness Centre being transferred to the Project or leased for a minimum of 25 years.

Company	Notes	Financial contribution.	In-kind services estimated value
Trust Fund	Written confirmation that we are eligible for a major grant. The Trust cannot be publically named at present to avoid association with lobbying a council decision.	Up to £250K	
H.S.B.C. Bank	Written confirmation - eligible for a community grant. (See Appendix 3.5)	£35K	
N.D. Metering Solutions	Cash donation, plus free installation of energy metering, plus continuous advice on energy management.	£5K	£10K
Everest Windows	Subject to site survey - replacement of windows, fascia boards, gutters, etc		Up to £12K
The Garnett Foundation	Start up grant pledged - £5K Year 2 revenue support grant - £5K	£10K	
Hawker & Palmer	Free financial planning advice, plus start-up grant of £1K	£1K	£1K
Trowers & Hamlins	Provide free legal advice for start-up and transfer contracts		Up to £5K
BoBriaSolutions Ltd	Free support for Information Security, Risk & Internal Audit support		£0.3K per annum
Woodcraft Folk	Volunteer wardens, support for administration and operational services. (see Appendix 3.2)		£1K
Centigen	Advice on estate management. Repairs/maintenance provided at cost.		£1K per annum
Two Rivers Housing	General financial and business advice. Provide conference facilities for fund raising events, etc.		£1.2K per annum
Field Studies Council	Support for professional and legal requirements and regulations - policy, provision and cover. (see Appendix 3.3)		£0.5K per annum
Mid Counties Coop	Volunteer staff support for specialist skills eg. marketing, procurement, administration, IT (see Appendix 3.4)		£2K per annum
Friends of the Wilderness (Staff)	Unremunerated employment in years 1 and 2		£20K
Friends of the Wilderness (volunteers)	Regular volunteer hours in support of staff tasks		£10K per annum
Friends of the Wilderness Centre	Pledged donations toward start-up	£1.2K	

Forest Voluntary Action Forum	Volunteer support for refurbishment and conservation management		To be agreed
Rotary Club – Forest of Dean	Support with fundraising, small grants and volunteer support.		To be agreed
World Class Citizens Ltd	Education, teaching and teacher training service contracted in at reduced cost for first two years of trading		£1K
Outdoor Learning Solutions	Education, teaching and teacher training service contracted in at reduced cost for first two years of trading		£1K
Totals		Approx. £300K	Approx. £60K

In addition to the quantified support shown above, we are currently negotiating additional corporate support with the following companies:

- Ecotricity – Renewable energy utility company
- Hales and Co. – Building suppliers
- Five Acres Garage – minibus requirements
- Motiva - Reconstruct and maintain low ropes course, climbing wall.
- K.W. Bell – Construction company.
- M.F. Freeman Ltd. – Construction company.
- Four Sided Triangle – Marketing agency
- ShrinkingWorld Media – Audio visual, film productions
- Design Print Imagination Ltd
- The Wye Valley Arts Centre
- Steve Gooch Ltd.

Sample evidence for help in-kind

Trevor Roach
Wilderness Project
Mitcheldean, Forest of Dean,
Gloucestershire

4th March 2014

Dear Trevor,

Woodcraft Folk would like to confirm its support for the Wilderness Project and its desire to see the Wilderness Centre reopen and continue to deliver good quality environmental and sustainability education for children, young people and adults.

Woodcraft Folk have fond memories of events previously held at the Wilderness Centre and would like to host future events on the site.

Woodcraft Folk are committed to support the Wilderness Project in achieving their goal of creating a viable community enterprise that will become a centre of excellence, providing nationally recognised environmental courses, workshops, training and community events for all. To realise this goal, Woodcraft Folk are willing to:

- Contribute to the Wilderness Project Board
- Support the Wilderness Project to engage with our Joint Centre Committee, sharing best practice, contacts and training with other residential centres managed by Woodcraft Folk
- Mobilise our volunteers to contribute to working weekends and Centre maintenance
- Explore the possibility of the Wilderness Centre being covered by our existing Public Liability insurance provision
- Facilitate payroll for Wilderness Centre staff
- Encourage our groups to book events and training at the Wilderness Centre

Yours sincerely,



Debs McCahon
Director of Development
Deborah.mccahon@woodcraft.org.uk
0845 217 8939



Woodcraft Folk
Education for Social Change

**YOUTH IS
NOT WASTED
ON THE YOUNG**

Woodcraft Folk House
9/10, 83 Crampton Street
LONDON
SE17 3BQ

General Secretary, Jon Nott
jon.nott@woodcraft.org.uk
020 7703 4173

General Enquiries
info@woodcraft.org.uk
www.woodcraft.org.uk

Woodcraft Folk is a registered charity in England and Wales (1073665) and in Scotland (SC039791)

Woodcraft Folk
Education for Social Change Since 1925



Sample evidence for help in-kind

Operational support from the Field Studies Council

Dear Wilderness Project,

We are looking at the possibility of creating FSC affiliated centres which may be of interest. This would aim to provide:

- Cost effective central services eg payroll, bill payment, electronic banking, pension provision, etc
- Collective buying power for things currently provided by the LEA eg energy, insurance.
- Some means of preventing relatively small unplanned events which are not normally insured causing a cash-flow crisis and possible closure eg cooker or boiler needing replacing at short notice or discovering asbestos, etc.

In addition it may be possible to look at ways of underwriting loans necessary to improve facilities but we have not got this far yet.

If you think this would be something you might be interested in let me know.

Rob Lucas,
Chief Executive Officer
Field Studies Council

Sample evidence for help in-kind

Mid Counties Co-operative

March 2014

The Mid Counties Co-operative will offer The Wilderness Project, subject to transfer and availability access to any appropriate service we can provide through our Colleague volunteering programme. This could include specialist support in areas such as marketing, purchasing, administration, IT services, as well as contributing to any refurbishment projects that need enthusiastic labour.

Kind Regards

Di Bateman.
Head of Membership Engagement.
Midcounties Cooperative

Sample – Grant eligibility



Mr Trevor Roach
The Board of the Wilderness Centre
Lineside Cottage
Baptist Way
Ruardean Hill
Glos.
GL17 9AR

11th April 2014

Dear Mr Roach,

Thank you for your time today in discussing the plans for The Wilderness Centre. As mentioned the project sits very well within HSBC's community project funding guidelines of environmental and educational focus. We would welcome an application for funding, of up to £35,000, to support this project and I have enclosed an application form.

The application would be reviewed by the banks Supporting Our Community Committee at the next sitting which is 1st May. The application and your eligibility for funding will be dependent on the community asset transfer being completed. If you require any assistance in completing the application please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'M Beane'.

HSBC Community Support Team

National Government Education Imperatives

Nature belongs at the heart of school life *Both within and outside the classroom, reforms are bringing school children into a closer understanding of our relationship with the natural world,*

writes **The Right Honourable Michael Gove MP**

Feb 2014

History, Edmund Burke wrote, is ‘a pact between the dead, the living and the yet unborn.’ Nowhere is this pact more important than in our relationship with nature.

It’s not just a safe and secure environment we are obliged to bequeath our children – but a love of nature, an appreciation of natural history, and an awareness of how human behaviour affects the world around us.

That is why our reforms are putting nature back at the heart of school life. From September next year, maintained schools will be teaching a new national curriculum. Our abiding aim has been to help every child secure the knowledge they need to participate as 21st century citizens – and a crucial part of that is making sure children leave school with a thorough grasp of the fundamental natural processes that sustain life.

Whether in geography, biology or chemistry, we are ensuring children learn about – and experience – nature. Children should know the names of different plant and animal species; they should understand natural processes such as photosynthesis and reproduction; and they should know about how physical and human geography changes over time.

In science, we’ve ensured pupils will be taught to identify and describe the functions of different parts of flowering plants, such as roots, stems, trunks, leaves and flowers. They will explore what plants need in order to survive – air, water, light, nutrients and room to grow. They will look at the role flowers play in the life-cycle of plants; studying pollination, seed formation and seed dispersal. They will be taught how to use classification keys to help group, identify and name a variety of living things in their local and wider environment, and they will understand how environments can change, sometimes posing dangers to nature.

The science of evolution and inheritance will be covered in detail. Pupils will learn how living things change over time, and what fossils can tell us about living things that once inhabited the Earth. They will be taught how animals and plants adapt to suit their environment and how that adaptation ensures survival and leads to evolution.

We don’t just want children to learn about nature but to venture outdoors and see it for themselves. There will be opportunities at all ages for learning outside the classroom. Throughout the curriculum, teachers are encouraged to make use of their school’s local environment.

Children will have the opportunity to observe plants and animals in their natural habitats from the very first year of school. They will be able to watch flowers and vegetables they themselves have planted grow; examine how habitats change through the year; and analyse life-cycle changes in the natural world around their school. They will be able to grow new plants from seeds, stem and root cuttings, tubers and bulbs. And they will be able to study changes in animals as they grow – for example, by hatching and rearing chicks – and compare how

different animals develop.

In geography, there is a renewed focus on physical geography, including humans' impact on the world around us. Pupils will learn about how landscapes develop and change over time and the impact on nature of weather and climate. They will study the similarities, differences and links between places on opposite sides of the globe.

Schools will have to be much more ambitious in the way they use field trips. Children as young as 5 will start using fieldwork to study the geography of their school, its grounds, and the surrounding environment. By the age of 11, children will have observed, measured, and recorded the human and physical features in the local area. They will be taught to use methods such as sketch maps, plans and graphs, as well as the latest digital technologies. At secondary school, pupils will use field work in different areas to collect, compare and contrast data to analyse different environments.

All these changes – in science, geography and cooking – will help schools nurture happier, healthier children; in touch with, and closer to, the natural world around them. That way we are helping fulfil Burke's pact – and, hopefully, leaving the natural world in safer hands.

This is Michael Gove's essay in the Conservative Environment Network's pamphlet, [Responsibility and Resilience: What the Environment means to Conservatives](#).

Gloucestershire children are running out of opportunities for learning outdoors.

Campaign to Save Outdoor Learning Centres

Press Release by the Council for Outdoor Learning

A petition has been launched calling for the government to protect outdoor education centres from imminent closure. One in three local authority centres are threatened and closures could deny millions of children the opportunity of potentially life-changing experiences.

The petition calls for the government to create a fixed-term transition fund and provide business training, which would enable Local Authority centres to survive long enough to become self-sufficient. It is thought that many of the threatened centres would then be able to remain open. If they are forced to close now, many would never reopen.

Leading education organisations including the Field Studies Council, Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres, English Outdoor Council, Institute for Outdoor Learning and National Association of Field Studies Officers have launched the campaign and are asking people to support it by signing the petition. If the petition receives 100,000 signatures this year the issue will be considered for debate in the House of Commons.

Dr Steve Tilling Director of Communications at the Field Studies Council said: “The potential loss of these opportunities comes at a time when health, physical activity and contact with nature are all declining. It will also impact the most on children from poorer and more disadvantaged groups who have little or no other opportunity to share an overnight experience away from home and visit places they would not otherwise see. The FSC is constantly working to ensure that everybody has the chance to get outdoors to learn and be inspired by the environment.”

Sample evidence – Supporting the vulnerable

Aston Project Support Letter

15 May 2012

Hi Trevor,

It was good to meet you this morning, and also to be reminded what a lovely site & facility The Wilderness is.

As we discussed, to confirm that, in partnership with the Co-Op, and dependent on a successful funding resolution, The Aston Project is more than happy to work with you to utilise The Wilderness to the benefit of children, young people and families who are engaged with The Aston Project, and who would not otherwise have access to, or even any knowledge about such an opportunity.

I have attached an article outlining The Aston Project for your information.

In brief, I see the opportunities as follows:

1. The Aston Project can support The Wilderness in offering a source of referrals of 'in need' young people and their families.
2. We can offer groups of young people from varied backgrounds to support you, both from Cheltenham and the Forest communities, in projects within your grounds - i.e. hedge laying, wood clearance, stone walling and general conservation work.
3. We can refer individual young people with individual needs who would benefit from the support and opportunities offered by the Centre.

In return, I hope that The Wilderness will support us in offering us places.

I look forward to hearing from you once funding is agreed.

Best Wishes

Lea

*PC 1498 Lea Butcher,
The Aston Project,
Office - Hesters Way Police Station | Princess Elizabeth Way |
Cheltenham | GL51 7SJ*

lea.butcher@gloucestershire.pnn.police.uk

Office 01242 247246

Sample Evidence for new markets

Recent Booking inquiry for Community use

World Challenge

I am very interested in using the Wilderness Centre as one of our training sites:

Every Summer we send away 5000 school students to different locations around the world from 2-4 weeks to learn about new cultures, teamwork, leadership skills, money management etc.

Before their expedition they have an 18 month build-up which includes a Training Expedition. This is where our 'Challengers' learn the skills they need to go on expedition. It also gives us a chance to check their fitness and to flag up any issues that may not arise otherwise.

For the Training Expeditions I use 13 different locations throughout the UK and need a location for the Forest of Dean between September and December.

Emma Jane. Training Co-ordinator. 2013

Evidence of new income streams to support core work with schools, youth and community groups.

Prospective Booking Inquiry in 2013

Future Me Personal Development Training

“It was really good to have an in depth conversation last week to discuss the possibility of a collaboration between the **Wilderness Project** and **Future Me Personal Development**.

I think we now both appreciate the unique offering that both of our organisations aim to bring to our markets and also the strong synergies that exist between us in the way we intend to operate.

Future Me is a personal development training company with an aspiration to be the benchmark brand offering personal development courses in the UK. We are designing exceptional development programmes based on the founding principles of Neuro Linguistic Programming and certified by the Guild of NLP.

We believe the synergies with the Wilderness Centre are compelling as we are striving for:

- A tranquil and inspirational setting to facilitate personal learning activity both in groups and in quiet personal contemplation.
- A shared experience for 15 and upwards delegates where they can live together for 5 days completely away from other distractions.
- A keen interest in the ecology of systems whether they be in nature or in behaviours and relationships.

We would be aiming to complete at least 1 training programme a month in core skills which would be for 15 people and last 5 days. This could equally though be worked around school holiday times every 6 weeks or so.

Please accept this email as a very clear expression of interest in the Wilderness Centre. We will be very interested to develop our conversation around what we can achieve together.

Chris Spray

Leading the way for disabled access – something to build on.

A sample support letter printed with the author's permission

Dear Councillor Hawthorn,

When the first notice of intent by the County Council to close the Wilderness centre was posted, I communicated with you and other officers of the county, about the very fine programme of work that was being offered by the staff of the centre.

I was at the time, Chair of the Forest of Dean, Duke of Edinburgh's Award Expedition Network and was concerned at the possible impact, both on the excellent work carried out by the volunteer members of the network and on the participants who attend the Special Needs Expedition Assessment week organised by the network.

I explained that although there are many centres in the forest that offer residential opportunities for expedition work, none of them were disable friendly. The Wilderness gave us the facilities to undertake expedition training and assessments with participants who had disabilities. This included participants in wheel chairs, both manual and electric, and we were able to recharge chairs overnight.

The fitting out of the full wet room on the ground floor made our life even easier and although we had to use the rear door on the first floor to get the manual wheel chair users to the dormitories, we managed, mainly due to the new zig zag path placed in for our convenience.

I have enclosed a report on one of the weeks for your information to enable you to see exactly what the Wilderness was able to offer these disabled participants that other residential centres were not able to offer. We have been using since the closure of the Wilderness Centre, The Bibblins Log Cabin and Burrow and although not completely disable friendly in access from the forest paths, have been able to adapt. The downside being that we were not able to accept applications from participants in electric wheelchairs due to the nature of the access points and no mains electricity for recharging the chairs. The cabin being supplied by a generator, which had to be switched off at midnight and the burrow on solar panels only supplied lighting. So you see, a valuable asset, both to us and the community of Gloucestershire was lost when the decision to close the Wilderness was taken. I expect the cost of keeping the security firm on site, over the past few years, would have supported the business plan put forward to keep it open. The plan did state that in three years it would be self financing, I believe.

To allow this excellent facility to pass into private hands to be developed into who knows what, would be criminal. The young people of Gloucestershire need facilities like the Wilderness had, and those disabled participants who attended our Assisted Needs Expedition weeks certainly benefitted from them.

I hope that you will see the immense benefit derived from the Wilderness by so many young people from your County and be proud of the many young people who attended from all over the UK and abroad to attend our, and yours, Assisted Needs Expedition Week.

Please give the Friends of the Wilderness chance to prove that they are capable of bringing the Wilderness back to life.

Yours sincerely

David Simmonds

Ex Chair - Forest of Dean Duke of Edinburgh Award Expedition Assessment Network

Fundraising support from Jonathon Porritt and Two Rivers Housing

A 'healthy step forward' in bid to save outdoor centre

By David Shepherd

david.shepherd@glosmedia.co.uk
 Tweet @DavidShepherd27

CAMPAIGNERS trying to rescue a Forest of Dean outdoor centre from the scrapheap have renewed hope of reaching their goal.

The Wilderness Centre, which provided a range of nature-based activities for schoolchildren, closed as part of Gloucestershire County Council cuts in 2011.

But a determined group of volunteers said they have made a "healthy step forward" to cover its £300,000 starting costs and to convince the authority to hand over the Mitcheldean site and is launching one final push to realise its vision.

Spokesman for the Wilderness Project Trevor Roach said a fund-raising event at the home of Two Rivers Housing in Newent hosted around 45 people and an interested cross-section of the business community on Monday night.

They have also gained two high-profile supporters - environmentalist Jonathon Porritt and legendary wildlife expert Sir David Attenborough. Both have expressed their support for the group's aims.

Mr Roach said: "The idea was to hear from the business community how we might stimulate support and engagement, and a lot of positive suggestions came out of it. We are asking people to pledge support financially or in kind and we have had a number of companies come forward.

"We have made a healthy step forward in covering all starting

SUPPORT:
 Garry King, chief executive of Two Rivers, speaking at the event.



FKLJLGF: Pictured at a fund raising event for The Wilderness Project at Two River Housing, Newent, are, left to right, Garry King, chief executive of Two Rivers, Trevor Roach, chairman of Wilderness Project, Jonathon Porritt,



MEETING: Members of the business community attended the fundraising event

costs to allow us to negotiate the centre from the council. Lots of significant meetings are going to be going on this week and we hope to have confirmation of solid support in the near future."

Mr Roach said the project has set a

deadline of the end of April when it hopes to make its final bid for the council to transfer ownership.

The project hopes to raise £300,000 for the renovation of the centre and to subsidise it for two years in order to allow it to become fully booked, if the bid is approved. In December 2013, the project conducted a survey of schools and community groups which it

claims proves the need for the centre still exists.

A building survey was commissioned in January which shows that significant investment is needed to refurbish the property.

"There is an increase in the obvious need to give more children the opportunity to get outdoors and away from TV and computers to engage with the natural world and to improve their health and learning," Mr Roach said.

Mr Roach said if the group "goes as far as it can", it will withdraw the bid and allow other community groups the chance to take it on, or expects the council will put the site on the open market.

Councillor Ray Theodoulou, cabinet member for finance at the county council, said: "We've worked with the Friends of the Wilderness for the past two years to give the group the best chance of taking over this building.

"Although it is taking longer than we would like, they are still free to submit their bid.

"However we have a duty to get the best value for taxpayers and money from the sale is needed to invest into protecting some of the county's most vulnerable people."

GLoucester Citizen, Wednesday March 19th 2014

Sample support letter – from Sir David Attenborough

5 Park Road, Richmond, Surrey TW10 6NS

22.2.14

Dear Mr. Kear,

Thank you for your letter. I am sorry to have been so long in responding to it, but it arrived while I was overseas.

I regret to say that I cannot offer to attend the event you are planning in March as I am just about to leave again, this time on an extended trip in Borneo.

Will the following quote be of help to your presentation :-

An understanding of the natural world is an essential part of education. Without it, children cannot understand their place in nature, not why they should protect it. . Not only that, but they are denied a source of profound pleasure that could last them all their lives.

Do use it in any way you wish

Best wishes

David Attenborough

Gloucestershire College Support letter

15 May 2012

Further to the meeting of the Senior Management Team of the College we are happy to become an Association Friend of the Wilderness Centre.

I think your paper has captured how we can work together very well, not sure there is anything to add.

I hope this helps you.

**Lynne Craig | Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality
Gloucestershire College**

The Wilderness Project and Gloucestershire College (RFoD) future working links.

Once the Wilderness Centre is re-established as a centre for environmental education and sustainable development there are a number of areas for future collaboration between our two organisations.

Both organisations are focused on the needs of young people and learners living and working in a sustainable Forest, as a sustainable environment with a sustainable economy and with sustainable communities.

The two organisations will seek to identify the unique and distinctive learning opportunities that exist within the 25,000 acres of Royal Forest throughout which we have freedom to roam and learn in.

Areas for collaboration:

- Professional development training for staff on sustainability policy and practice.
- Use of Wilderness Centre residential facilities for targeted courses.
- Use of Wilderness Centre facilities and environmental education staff for targeted field studies and environmental courses.
- Return to learning programmes for 16-19 year olds using environmental projects at the Wilderness.
- Foundation Phase training for providers - teaching and learning in the outdoors.
- Collaboration in developing the role and content of environmental and sustainability dimensions in a variety of subjects eg. science, language development, creative industries, engineering, catering, building, adult education, holistic therapies

Why save the Wilderness Centre?

“Without centres like this (the Wilderness) we are putting the future of our planet into the hands of a generation who have had no experience of the outdoors and have never been given the chance to witness the wonders of nature or see first-hand how habitats suffer or thrive depending on how they are managed.” [Kate Humble](#)

Caroline Spelman when Environment Secretary said in 2012/13: “If ever there was a time for the Big Society to protect our natural environment, this is it.”

“I’m afraid children don’t know what is on their own doorsteps. I used the Wilderness many times in the past and hope to use it in the future. It is a fabulous place and they can do things so much better than we can in schools – and it has so much more to offer.” A Gloucestershire Headteacher.

UNICEF’s report into **child well-being** (2011) placed Britain bottom on the European table and argued that “Losing touch with nature was a large part of the problem”.

“In 2010 **92%** of parents thought their children should have more opportunities to get into the countryside to learn about nature.” (Countryside Alliance Foundation report 2010)

Only 10% of children played in natural places such as woodland or countryside (2009 report by Natural England) – Children spend 75% of their leisure time in front of television, computers etc.

In 2013 Ofsted identified: “learning outside the classroom as “better” education.”

One in three local authority-run outdoor learning centres are due to close by 2015 (Institute of Outdoor Learning).

“Teachers face uncertainty about where to access high quality learning resources” (Institute of Outdoor Learning)

“Nature is sometimes taken for granted and undervalued. But people cannot flourish without the benefits and services our natural environment provides.” Government White Paper on the Environment.

“Being outdoors, surrounded by the natural world, promotes a greater understanding of the way it works and the need to take care of the environment. It’s all very simple really, but surprisingly difficult to get through to successive governments”. Alan Titchmarsh 9th February 2014.

“Do we really expect children, who having no experience of the countryside, unable to evaluate the importance of natural systems to grow into responsible citizens and voters?” (A grandparent)

Plant species list for Wilderness wildflower pastures, ancient woodland and boundaries.

A 2005 environmental survey recognised the woods, meadows and boundaries as key conservation areas. 194 plant species were identified on the estate with the grassland being designated as Key Wildlife Sites

Flowering Plants

Field Maple (<i>Acer campestre</i>)	Sycamore (<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>)
Norway Maple (<i>Acer platanoides</i>)	Yarrow (<i>Achillea millefolium</i>)
Ground-elder (<i>Aegopodium podagraria</i>)	Horse-chestnut (<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>)
Agrimony (<i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i>)	Common Bent (<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>)
Bugle (<i>Ajuga reptans</i>)	Garlic Mustard (<i>Alliaria petiolata</i>)
Ramsons (<i>Allium ursinum</i>)	Meadow Foxtail (<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>)
Wood Anemone (<i>Anemone nemorosa</i>)	Wild Angelica (<i>Angelica sylvestris</i>)
Barren Brome (<i>Anisantha sterilis</i>)	Sweet Vernal-grass (<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>)
Cow Parsley (<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>)	Columbine (<i>Aquilegia vulgaris</i>)
Lesser Burdock (<i>Arctium minus</i>)	False Oat-grass (<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>)
Lords-and-Ladies (<i>Arum maculatum</i>)	Daisy (<i>Bellis perennis</i>)
Silver Birch (<i>Betula pendula</i>)	False Brome (<i>Brachypodium sylvaticum</i>)
Upright Brome (<i>Bromopsis erecta</i>)	Hairy-brome (<i>Bromopsis ramosa</i>)
Soft-brome (<i>Bromus hordeaceus</i>)	White Bryony (<i>Bryonia dioica</i>)
Box (<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>)	Harebell (<i>Campanula rotundifolia</i>)
Shepherd's-purse (<i>Capsella bursa-pastoris</i>)	Cuckooflower (<i>Cardamine pratensis</i>)
Spring Sedge (<i>Carex caryophylla</i>)	Wood-sedge (<i>Carex sylvatica</i>)
Sweet Chestnut (<i>Castanea sativa</i>)	Hornbeam (<i>Carpinus betulus</i>)
Cedar-of-Lebanon (<i>Cedrus libani</i>)	Common Knapweed (<i>Centaurea nigra</i>)
Common Mouse-ear (<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>)	Rosebay Willowherb (<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>)
Dwarf Thistle (<i>Cirsium acaule</i>)	Creeping Thistle (<i>Cirsium arvense</i>)
Marsh Thistle (<i>Cirsium palustre</i>)	Spear Thistle (<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>)
Traveller's-joy (<i>Clematis vitalba</i>)	Pignut (<i>Conopodium majus</i>)
Dogwood (<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>)	Hazel (<i>Corylus avellana</i>)
Cotoneaster (<i>Cotoneaster</i> sp)	Hawthorn (<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>)
Smooth Hawk's-beard (<i>Crepis capillaris</i>)	Crested Dog's-tail (<i>Cynosurus cristatus</i>)
Cock's-foot (<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>)	Common Spotted-orchid (<i>Dactylorhiza fuchsii</i>)
Spurge-laurel (<i>Daphne laureola</i>)	Tufted Hair-grass (<i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i>)
Male-fern (<i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i>)	Great Willowherb (<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>)
Broad-leaved Willowherb (<i>Epilobium montanum</i>)	Spindle (<i>Euonymus europaeus</i>)
Beech (<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>)	Copper Beech (<i>Fagus sylvatica</i> var <i>purpurea</i>)
Giant Fescue (<i>Festuca gigantea</i>)	Meadow Fescue (<i>Festuca pratensis</i>)
Red Fescue (<i>Festuca rubra</i>)	Wild Strawberry (<i>Fragaria vesca</i>)
Ash (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>)	Snowdrop (<i>Galanthus nivalis</i>)
Cleavers (<i>Galium aparine</i>)	Woodruff (<i>Galium odoratum</i>)
Hedge Bedstraw (<i>Galium mollugo</i>)	Lady's Bedstraw (<i>Galium verum</i>)
Meadow Crane's-bill (<i>Geranium pratense</i>)	Herb-Robert (<i>Geranium robertianum</i>)
Wood Avens (<i>Geum urbanum</i>)	Ground-ivy (<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>)
Ivy (<i>Hedera helix</i>)	Downy Oat-grass (<i>Helictotrichon pubescens</i>)
Hogweed (<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>)	Hawkweed (<i>Hieracium</i> sp)
Yorkshire-fog (<i>Holcus lanatus</i>)	Bluebell (<i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>)
Imperforate St John's-wort (<i>Hypericum maculatum</i>)	Perforate St. John's-wort (<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>)
Cat's-ear (<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>)	Holly (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>)
Walnut (<i>Juglans regia</i>)	Compact Rush (<i>Juncus conglomeratus</i>)
Mountain-laurel (<i>Kalmia latifolia</i>)	Field Scabious (<i>Knautia arvensis</i>)
Yellow Archangel (<i>Lamiastrum galeobdolon</i>)	Nipplewort (<i>Lapsana communis</i>)
Toothwort (<i>Lathraea squamaria</i>)	Bitter-vetch (<i>Lathyrus linifolius</i>)
Meadow Vetchling (<i>Lathyrus pratensis</i>)	Rough Hawkbit (<i>Leontodon hispidus</i>)
Oxeye Daisy (<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>)	Martagon-lily (<i>Lilium martagon</i>)
Fairy Flax (<i>Linum catharticum</i>)	Common Twayblade (<i>Listera ovata</i>)
Perennial Rye-grass (<i>Lolium perenne</i>)	Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>)
Large Bird's-foot-trefoil (<i>Lotus pedunculatus</i>)	Field Wood-rush (<i>Luzula campestris</i>)
Wood Melick (<i>Melica uniflora</i>)	Dog's Mercury (<i>Mercurialis perennis</i>)
Wood Millet (<i>Milium effusum</i>)	Three-nerved Sandwort (<i>Moehringia trinervia</i>)
Black Mulberry (<i>Morus nigra</i>)	Wall Lettuce (<i>Mycelis muralis</i>)

Field Forget-me-not (<i>Myosotis arvensis</i>)	Green-winged Orchid (<i>Orchis morio</i>)
Daffodil (<i>Narcissus pseudonarcissus</i> ssp. <i>pseudonarcissus</i>)	Green Alkanet (<i>Pentaglottis sempervirens</i>)
Wood-sorrel (<i>Oxalis acetosella</i>)	Smaller Cat's-tail (<i>Phleum bertolonii</i>)
Mock-orange (<i>Philadelphus</i> sp)	Scots Pine (<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>)
Timothy (<i>Phleum pratense</i>)	Greater Plantain (<i>Plantago major</i>)
Ribwort Plantain (<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>)	Wood Meadow-grass (<i>Poa nemoralis</i>)
Annual Meadow-grass (<i>Poa annua</i>)	Milkwort (<i>Polygala vulgaris</i>)
Rough Meadow-grass (<i>Poa trivialis</i>)	Trailing Tormentil (<i>Potentilla anglica</i>)
Solomon's-seal (<i>Polygonatum multiflorum</i>)	Creeping Cinquefoil (<i>Potentilla reptans</i>)
Tormentil (<i>Potentilla erecta</i>)	Cowslip (<i>Primula veris</i>)
Barren Strawberry (<i>Potentilla sterilis</i>)	Wild Cherry (<i>Prunus avium</i>)
Primrose (<i>Primula vulgaris</i>)	Cherry Laurel (<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>)
Plum (<i>Prunus domestica</i>)	Blackthorn (<i>Prunus spinosa</i>)
Portugal Laurel (<i>Prunus lusitanica</i>)	Sessile Oak (<i>Quercus petraea</i>)
Bracken (<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>)	Meadow Buttercup (<i>Ranunculus acris</i>)
Pedunculate Oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>)	Bulbous Buttercup (<i>Ranunculus bulbosus</i>)
Goldilocks Buttercup (<i>Ranunculus auricomus</i>)	Yellow-rattle (<i>Rhinanthus minor</i>)
Creeping Buttercup (<i>Ranunculus repens</i>)	False-acacia (<i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i>)
Rhododendron (<i>Rhododendron</i> sp)	Sorrel (<i>Rumex acetosa</i>)
Bramble (<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>)	Goat Willow (<i>Salix caprea</i>)
Broad-leaved Dock (<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>)	Sanicle (<i>Sanicula europaea</i>)
Elder (<i>Sambucus nigra</i>)	Common Ragwort (<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>)
Londonpride (<i>Saxifraga x urbium</i>)	Bittersweet (<i>Solanum dulcamara</i>)
Red Campion (<i>Silene dioica</i>)	Rowan (<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>)
Prickly Sow-thistle (<i>Sonchus asper</i>)	Hedge Woundwort (<i>Stachys sylvatica</i>)
Betony (<i>Stachys officinalis</i>)	Lesser Stitchwort (<i>Stellaria graminea</i>)
Bladdernut (<i>Staphylea pinnata</i>)	Bog Stitchwort (<i>Stellaria uliginosa</i>)
Greater Stitchwort (<i>Stellaria holostea</i>)	Devil's-bit Scabious (<i>Succisa pratensis</i>)
Chickweed (<i>Stellaria media</i>)	Black Bryony (<i>Tamus communis</i>)
Snowberry (<i>Symphoricarpos albus</i>)	Yew (<i>Taxus baccata</i>)
Dandelion agg. (<i>Taraxacum</i> sp.)	Lime (<i>Tilia x vulgaris</i>)
Small-leaved Lime (<i>Tilia cordata</i>)	Goat's-beard (<i>Tragopogon pratensis</i>)
Upright Hedge-parsley (<i>Torilis japonica</i>)	Zigzag Clover (<i>Trifolium medium</i>)
Lesser Trefoil (<i>Trifolium dubium</i>)	White Clover (<i>Trifolium repens</i>)
Red Clover (<i>Trifolium pratense</i>)	Wych Elm (<i>Ulmus glabra</i>)
Yellow Oat-grass (<i>Trisetum flavescens</i>)	Common Nettle (<i>Urtica dioica</i>)
English Elm (<i>Ulmus procera</i>)	Germander Speedwell (<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>)
Great Mullein (<i>Verbascum thapsus</i>)	Common Field-speedwell (<i>Veronica persica</i>)
Wood Speedwell (<i>Veronica montana</i>)	Tufted Vetch (<i>Vicia cracca</i>)
Wayfaring-tree (<i>Viburnum lantana</i>)	Bush Vetch (<i>Vicia sepium</i>)
Common Vetch (<i>Vicia sativa</i>)	Common Dog-violet (<i>Viola riviniana</i>)
Early Dog-violet (<i>Viola reichenbachiana</i>)	