

GROWING OUR FUTURE

WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL
FORESTRY FRAMEWORK



THE TICK WOOD PROJECT



The Tick Wood Project began in April 2008 aimed at Priority Prolific Offenders (PPO's) with a high degree of acquisitive crime, usually to fund an addiction to illegal drugs or alcohol. Tick Wood is based within Telford & Wrekin and is an impressive exemplar of how to tackle the many challenges associated with breaking a cycle of crime and addiction by improving health and well-being within a quiet woodland environment, learning forestry and coppice skills to develop employability and providing an opportunity to leave with an Open College Network accredited qualification. The Tick Wood Project is run in partnership with West Mercia Probation Trust in woodland owned by a private woodland owner. The probationers develop social skills working in a group. The woodland environment helps with emotional and mental well-being, and they learn about working with the land, the environment, conservation and making wood products. The Tick Wood Project demonstrates how the natural environment and learning new skills can provide positive intervention and could be replicated throughout the country.

Objectives:

- To develop self esteem and confidence by tackling emotional and mental well-being
- To develop social skills through team work, using practical and physical skills
- To increase opportunities to be physically active in an outdoor setting
- To provide interruption and distraction from destructive lifestyle choices
- To provide an education and training route to develop employability
- To provide training qualifications in Open College Network (OCN) accredited skills.
- To engage in good woodland management practice and enhance habitats for wildlife
- To produce woodland products and take pride in something they have created.

Actions:

- Two sessions per week, working with West Mercia Probation Trust.
- Providing opportunities to learn sustainable woodland management
- Working as a team to manage the woodland
- Testing physical health through walking, both within the large woodland and the steep access path to Tick Wood. Also through the physical activity of woodland management
- Preparing and eating meals together within the woodland
- Making woodland products
- Supporting a progression route to more training and voluntary work.

Achievements:

- 13 registered for OCN qualifications from 65 participants (63 men and 2 women). Four completed their OCNs and a further six plan to complete the qualification.
- Observational records show improved motivation, confidence and physical health.
- Developed employability skills with 7 leaving to go into employment.
- Some participants chose to return to the project as volunteers when their probation order ends.

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Background:

The Tick Wood Project began in April 2008 aimed at Priority Prolific Offenders (PPO's) with a high degree of acquisitive crime, usually to fund an addiction to illegal drugs or alcohol. The project was developed by Judy Walker, Small Woods Executive Director and West Mercia Probation Trust. The project now takes anyone on a probation order but still aims to target PPO's primarily. Referrals come from Offender Managers, STEP (Skills, Training and Employment Programme), drug workers, programme staff and the offenders themselves.

Quotes:

- "I wish I could still come after I finished my hours...I know I need to find a job now.....and I am going to stay out of trouble with the police."
- "Good environment, enjoyed the work the people it was just good all round".
- "Everything is good about Tick Wood, the open air, time to think, the work.
- "I'm learning so much being at Tick Wood"
- "I enjoyed going out into the woods and making things out of woodI learnt how to build and carve things out of wood something I wouldn't have thought I'd be able to do."

Partners:

- The Tick Wood Project is managed by a partnership of Small Woods and West Mercia Probation Trust and includes financial support from Sainsburys Family Trust.
- The woodland has been provided by a private woodland owner
- The project employs a probation officer and a Forest Skills Trainer.
- Participants are referred to the project by West Mercia Probation Trust
- An external evaluation of the Tick Wood Project is scheduled to be carried out in 2010.

WMRFF Objectives: Main Theme & Others

- HW 1 : To maximise the use of woodland and forestry to deliver a healthier region (physically, mentally and spiritually)
- HW 2: To develop further links between wooded green space and health
- ELS 2: To maintain the woodland and forestry workforce and encourage new entrants
- FSI 4: To develop a programme of specific initiatives for hard to reach groups
- FSI 5: Link private and other woodland owners to develop access initiatives for excluded groups

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