

Sacred Earth

Community Benefit Society

Community Land Project & Nature Reserve



Executive Business Plan

September 2016

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Executive Summary

Sacred Earth CIC (*company reg. 7654179*) was set up in June 2011 on land purchased by philanthropist Roger Ross and leased to the organisation on a long term basis with a peppercorn rent. Sacred Earth is a not-for-profit social enterprise which is responding to the growing concerns of our community network about a wide range of interconnected issues, including access to land, food security, climate change, social exclusion and nature deficit disorder. The organisation acts as a platform to raise awareness, educate and empower individuals and communities to find practical, hands-on solutions which directly address these issues at a local and societal level.



The main lake at Sacred Earth used by the South Downs Angling Club and potential source of abundant hydro-electric power

In the summer of 2016 Sacred Earth became a Community Benefit Society. In September, as part of this process we are launching a community share offer to raise £40,000. In addition we will be receiving a grant of £15,000 via the FEA Network (through the [Just Growth funding programme](#)) and a loan of £15,000 from [CCF](#), all of which will be invested in capital and revenue costs of our first year of operating as a CBS.

Focusing our activity mainly on our 40 acre site near Horam in East Sussex, our aim is to reach grant independence within the next five years. During this period we are also aiming to:

1. Implement a new agroecology initiative, making and selling [Biochar](#) to subsidise our not-for-profit, community-focused projects
2. Expand our existing educational programmes to work with more schools and offer regular adult workshops
3. Provide support in the form of access to land, training, mentoring, tools and infrastructure, for young, independent rural entrepreneurs
4. Produce food, medicinal herbs and other resources for the local community
5. Offer a variety of apprenticeship and volunteer opportunities
6. Provide a valuable social resource for the local community of Horam as well as our wider community network in East Sussex
7. Establish ourselves as a centre for [Ecotherapy](#) in the South East
8. Continue to regenerate and steward the land, providing a balanced habitat for the local ecology

We are well on the way to achieving these aims. Our education team are already facilitating rites of passage, community building and deep nature connection for children, teenagers and adults. Our Biochar initiative will provide us not only with a viable income but also an effective way to regenerate depleted soil and mitigate the effects of climate change. Our backing of a diverse range of projects on the land (including a young biodynamic entrant farmer, a willow grower and basket maker, an ecotherapist, natural bee keepers and a herbal CSA) offer a rich array of skills, services, resources and support which can be accessed by the local community.

Sacred Earth's management committee are united in our desire to work with regenerative processes, whether through enlightened organic/biodynamic agriculture/permaculture ethics and principles which benefit the land and the people working on it, or through experiential learning and community activities which nourish the hearts and minds of the people who visit.

With our new profile as a Community Benefit Society and the opportunities this will provide us with to engage much more openly and directly with (and be accountable to) our community of interest, we are excited to envisage a period of accelerated growth and movement towards meeting goals we feel are fundamentally important not only for the health and vitality of our local community but of communities everywhere.

Business model

What is Sacred Earth?

Sacred Earth is a community land project which was set up in 2011 on the 40 acre site of an abandoned brickworks near the village of Horam in East Sussex. We are an organisation with social, educational, agricultural, ecological and therapeutic aims. Just as everything in the web of life is interconnected, we see these aims as being fundamentally interconnected too.

In addition to our own projects and programmes we also support entrant farmers, rural craft entrepreneurs and nature-oriented therapists by providing affordable access to land, tools and infrastructure as well as mentoring and project management support. Our vision is to create a thriving community of land stewards, farmers, therapists, teachers, students, apprentices and volunteers working together on the land, supporting one another and the local community in a variety of important ways.

We're a passionate and dynamic organisation which is committed to exploring traditional and indigenous practices as well as finding new and innovative ways of doing things.

Some of our own projects and programmes include:

- **Sacred Earth Biochar** (*agricultural, ecological, educational*)
- **Earth Steward Apprenticeship** (*social, educational*)
- **Warden Park Primary Academy** (*social, educational*)
- **Farm Buddies partnership** (*agricultural, social, educational, therapeutic*)

Some of the projects we support on the land include:

- **Hathor Farm** (*agricultural, educational*)
- **Sacred Seeds Herbal Project** (*agricultural, educational, therapeutic*)
- **Annemarie O'Sullivan – Willow grower, maker and teacher** (*agricultural, educational*)
- **Oliver Bettany - Ecotherapist** (*social, therapeutic*)

More information about all of these projects can be found later on in this document. As the lists suggest, a wide range of different projects take place on the land (and in other locations in Sussex), organised and/or supported by Sacred Earth. However, from a financial perspective, our new Biochar initiative and our established and expanding educational projects and programmes are the critical ingredients in the future sustainability of the business, fundamental to our plan to be financially independent within five years. These areas of our business will provide the secure financial base required to implement new projects without reliance on grant funding.

Sacred Earth Biochar

Sacred Earth Biochar is a new enterprise we're launching in 2016. Using our existing kiln, we plan to produce up to 3000 kilos of biochar per annum, a key ingredient in our *Earth Elixirs* range of products which we will sell to small and large scale growers in the local area and beyond.

What is Biochar?

Biochar is charcoal which is made at lower temperatures than ordinary charcoal. Because it has a sponge-like structure beneficial microbes in the soil can colonise the biochar and so it becomes a "coral reef" of nutrients for plants to easily access through their roots.

Not only is Biochar an effective soil conditioner and substrate for organic plant beds, it is also a proven way to sequester carbon in the



*The Ithaka journal lists
[55 uses for Biochar](#)*

ground: a small-scale, localised technique for mitigating against climate change which is partly supported through our [LocalGiving.com](https://www.localgiving.com) page. For more information see our section on Sacred Earth Biochar on page 13.

Education

As the proliferation of forest schools in recent years demonstrates, nature-based education is a huge growth area, with a strong appeal not only to alternative educators (e.g. home school networks), but widely accepted by a cross-section of mainstream schools in both wealthy and deprived areas. Sacred Earth has been active in this sector since 2011, our flagship *Earth Steward Apprenticeship* year course for teenagers has proved very popular and our programmes for Michael Hall Steiner School and Walden Park Primary Academy reflect the broad demographic of children and young people we work with. We're now well placed to capitalise on these rich experiences, not only by rolling out more events and programmes for children in the coming years but also running more courses and workshops for adults, another huge growth industry in the UK (as committee member Alice Bettany's successful management of [Workshops at Wowo](#) testifies) and one which can provide Sacred Earth with a significant revenue stream.



*Making animal traps on the
ESA year course*

Supported projects

Sacred Earth sees itself as an incubator for fledgling agricultural businesses like [Sacred Seeds](#) and Hathor Farm. We recognise that access to land is one of the main challenges which young rural entrepreneurs face in the UK, so the rent we charge is affordable, increasing over time as projects find their feet. We aim to create an environment in which small businesses like these receive the practical support they need in order to flourish, so we provide access to shared tools and infrastructure as well as marketing, advertising, project management and funding support.

Mutual support and co-operation are values which are at the heart of everything we do, as are the [Permaculture Ethics](#) of earth care, people care and fair share. Crucially they are also values which Sacred Seeds, Hathor Farm and the other small enterprises we work with subscribe to. Consequently these small, independent businesses give a huge amount back to Sacred Earth and the wider community.

Their relationship with Sacred Earth is reciprocal, both in financial terms (through a profit sharing scheme) and in practical terms – we are all part of the same team, supporting each other in our individual aims at the same time as working together towards the same vision: a renaissance in small-scale, sustainable, ecologically sensitive agriculture in the UK.

The model we're trialling with Sacred Seeds and Hathor Farm is one which we hope to replicate by encouraging more small businesses with a similar ethos to choose Sacred Earth as their home. Additionally we're hoping to pioneer an organisational model which demonstrates that Community Benefit Societies which focus on enlightened/sustainable agriculture can be successful. We hope our example will encourage similar organisations to choose this model and the journey we are pioneering now will make it easier for them to do so.



Sacred Seeds herb box

The story so far

Acquisition of the land

Our Horam site is formed from what was once part of North End Farm and the Old Horam Brickworks, both of which had been in a state of disrepair for a number of years. In 2011 Sussex-based philanthropist Roger Ross purchased the site and leased it to Sacred Earth (with a peppercorn rental agreement) in order for us to turn it into a community project, with the intention of putting the land into a trust at an appropriate time. In June of the same year we created Sacred Earth CIC, a social enterprise with aims to increase access to land, encourage rural economies, strengthen local community networks and deliver experiential learning courses and land learner schemes with a key focus on children and young adults.

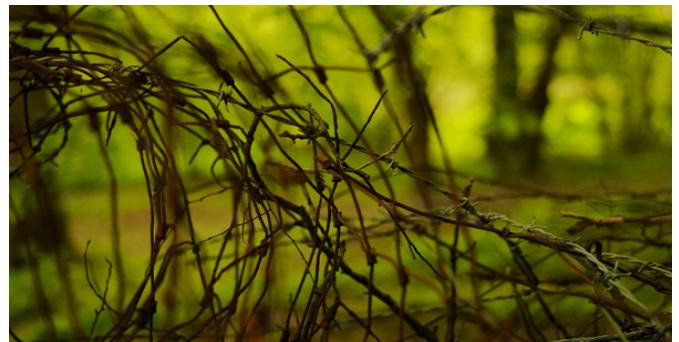


Features and location of the land

The Horam site consists of 40 acres and is part of the Low Weald, a third of which is mature and fringe woodland (15.4 acres), interspersed with arable (8.9 acres) and pasture (9 acres). We also have two small lakes, one of which is a well-stocked fishing lake (leased by South Downs Angling Club), the other is a disused clay pit that is a natural wildlife sanctuary with diverse bird, reptile and mammal species. The surrounding area is mixed with small stream woodland valleys, agricultural fields, farms and a scattering of local rural residents. Horam village (pop. 2,700) is less than a mile away and our western boundary follows the Cuckoo Trail, an old dismantled railway heavily used by walkers, horse riders and cyclists which runs for 23km between Heathfield in the north and Polegate in the south. The town of Hailsham (pop. 20,500), a livestock farmers' market town which received a Royal Charter in the 13th Century, lies 4 miles to the south of the site. Heathfield (pop 11,500), another popular farmers' market town, lies 3.5 miles to the north.

Achievements

We've achieved a lot since 2011 with respect to the educational and ecological aims of the project. This period has seen us deliver five successful year long education programmes for young adults aged 13-18, a number of shorter programmes for schools and lots of day activities. We have also done a great deal at the Horam site to restore balance to the local ecology. During the first three years a huge amount of clearing and caretaking was undertaken, including renewing and repairing some of the woodland areas in order to bring them into a manageable coppice rotation. We also mapped and carried out sensitive ecological surveys of the whole site and started drawing up plans for the integration of livestock and people onto the land.



Barbed wire at Sacred Earth - tonnes of rubbish have been removed from the site over the last 5 years

We have installed a large yurt and a modern Biochar kiln to turn the poor quality willow coppice into a high end Biochar product, though due to high production costs full implementation of this project has been delayed until now. Over the years the land has played host to various community days, family camps, wwoofers (Willing Workers On Organic Farms) and volunteer programmes. Through our LocalGiving.com page we have received donations which have enabled us to install six bee hives and create a bee sanctuary using natural bee keeping methods. We have also planted a fruit orchard next to the main lake, two nut production coppices and re-established hedgerows

on various parts of the land. In December 2015 we developed a [new website](#) which appropriately reflects the dynamic nature of our recent growth as an organisation.

Social impacts of the organisation

Sacred Earth is a community focused organisation with social aims and objectives. Here are five brief case studies which demonstrate some of the social impacts which we are making as an organisation.

Earth Steward Apprenticeship

Now in it's seventh year, the Earth Steward Apprenticeship is a year course for young people aged between 13-17 which is designed to inspire awe, wonder and respect for nature in participants through practical, sensory and playful outdoor activities. The programme enables participants to develop real connections with plants and animals, become more deeply engaged with their local community and to feel the excitement of discovery as they develop a sense of belonging through knowing their place on the Earth. [Visit our website for more information.](#)



Telling stories around the fire at an ESA overnight camp

The programme enables participants to develop a variety of skills to help them thrive in the natural environment, discover their role as integrated members and care givers of the natural world, gain a greater depth of appreciation and understanding for the outdoors, become more self-reliant and able to adapt to an ever-changing world and develop strategies for taking sustainable practices into adult life.

Warden Park Primary Academy

Now in it's fourth year, this is a weekly programme (which takes place over ten weeks each year) for 9-10 year old children who attend Warden Park Primary Academy, located in the Bentswood council estate in Haywards Heath. On site at the school, we deliver a programme of forest school activities with a focus on engagement in nature, development of core skills, better awareness and love of the outdoors.

Many of the children we work with have very little access to any form of nature. Through the art of nature play we enable them to begin developing a relationship with nature, providing opportunities to discover, explore and challenge themselves, building self confidence and respect for themselves, each other and the world around them.

Monthly Mentoring

Now in it's third year, this monthly programme (run in partnership with [Cultivating Curiosity](#)) is for children aged between 3-13 years. Over sixty families are currently involved. Nature connection exercises, bushcraft, woodland crafts, wild play and a variety of other forest school activities are employed with the aim to educate and strengthen children's relationships with themselves, their peers and the natural world.

The programme provides opportunities for children of all ages to engage with the woodland world in a safe context, mentored by professional practitioners. A secondary benefit of the programme is the support it provides for parents, not only with respect to childcare but also in relation to the opportunity it offers them to be members of a wide reaching community which is actively engaged in the mentoring of their children and the support of one another.



Victoria Mew from Sacred Earth and Cultivating Curiosity demonstrating the bow drill

Herbal medicine for equine-assisted therapies

Run in partnership with [Sacred Seeds Herbal Project](#), this recent event we ran for Greenwich University/Hadlow Down College focused on the practical aspects of providing herbal medicine for horses, including foraging and processing herbs and making ointments, poultices and fermentations. Events like this support students who attend mainstream educational institutions by providing practical, experiential learning opportunities, enabling them to achieve a better understanding of the important part that “alternative” natural remedies can play in the healing process.

Community Days

We regularly host events in which individuals, families and organisations which are part of our East Sussex community network come to share food and fellowship and work together for a few hours on some of the community-led initiatives running at our Horam site. In the past some of these activities have included planting a community orchard, natural bee keeping, rubbish/waste clearing, Equinox celebrations and creating Biodynamic Preparations. We've also run a team building day for the Environment Agency and we host volunteer days every Tuesday and Thursday throughout the year.

As well as strengthening our community network, these events offer community members access to nature, opportunities to participate in inclusive, regenerative cultural processes and develop land-based skills.



Celebrating the Spring Equinox this year at Sacred Earth

The future

Community share offer

In 2016 Sacred Earth has changed its legal structure to become a Community Benefit Society (see section "What is a Community Benefit Society?" on page 11 for more information). This transition is instrumental to the future of the organisation in a number of important ways. Not only do we recognise that engagement with and support of the local community need to become even more central to our ethos, Sacred Earth also requires an injection of capital (in the form of community shares and other funding streams) in order to take full advantage of this defining moment in our evolution as a community-focused organisation: We feel this evolution requires a big surge of energy in 2016-17 in order to reach the next rung of our developmental ladder.



New promotional material sharing the news of our transition to a Community Benefit Society

With respect to our first community share offer (running in September), we're asking people to invest in the vision of what Sacred Earth could become if we're able to continue growing and climbing this ladder. Members of our particular community of interest recognise that more organisations like Sacred Earth are needed in order to bring into the centre of our culture the importance of connecting ecology with agriculture, education and health in order to build healthy and resilient communities. We hope to offer a shining example and provide a roadmap for other organisations with similar objectives. For a better sense of what this example might look like please read our vision statement in the appendices of this document.

The aim of the share offer is to raise £40,000 through the sale of community shares. This will match funding we receive through the Just Growth funding programme. The money we raise will be invested in tools, infrastructure and skills to support a variety of new projects on the land, with the ultimate aim of creating a profitable, sustainable, ecological, community-owned business.

Please see the *Projects and initiatives* and *Finances and funding* sections of this document for more information about the specific projects, infrastructure and skills we will be investing in during this period.

Community aims and benefits

We are taking practical steps to overcome the social, environmental and economic challenges which face our communities, finding ways of tackling these challenges which are inclusive, sustainable, regenerative, ecologically sensitive and in alignment with permaculture, organic and biodynamic principles. We are doing this through:

- *Stewardship*
Responsible stewardship of the land using a range of traditional and modern techniques which aim to promote an increase in biodiversity for the benefit of local wildlife and the local human community.
- *Mentoring*
Educating children, young people and adults in regenerative practices using experiential learning tools which unlock potential, promote health and wellbeing and nurture vital nature and community connections.
- *Growth*
Growing food, medicinal herbs and raising animals in ways which reduce impact on the environment and builds economic and social resilience by developing a local food network which benefits the local community.

The remainder of this section highlights some of the benefits of our work at Sacred Earth which will be fostered by the current surge in energy and investment as we become a fully-fledged Community Benefit Society.

Social/community benefits

Our communities have become increasingly fragmented and atomised as a result of the individualising effects of our consumer culture and the secularisation of society. Communities are losing their cohesion and loneliness and social exclusion are rife. Horam is a village with only a few communal institutions, and with a potential influx of thousands of new residents in the coming years, a community-focused organisation like Sacred Earth has the potential to provide an extremely important community service, a place which is not a church or a pub where people can gather, work and socialise together, forging important community bonds.

Educational benefits

Conventional educational tools provide us with many ways to teach our children and young people certain types of knowledge but not others. Our school system readily facilitates the development of IQ but is not so effective at nurturing other things which are important to healthy psychological development, such as EQ (emotional intelligence) and CQ (cultural intelligence). Our experiential education programmes are designed to address this disparity by nurturing these frequently under-developed areas of the psyche. Nature-based education has been proven to assist significantly in the integration of these different aspects of our personalities.



Sacred Earth founder Phil Greenwood playing the balance game with a student on the ESA year course

Agricultural benefits

Our current food system, which often sees our food travel many thousands of miles before reaching our refrigerators and is dominated by supermarkets which put a huge amount of pressure on suppliers and farmers, is inherently unsustainable. Food security is fundamental to the health and wellbeing of a community. A more localised food network is one which is more resilient to changes in global food prices and more supportive of local businesses, keeping money in the local economy and enabling local farms to thrive as opposed to barely survive. By championing these ideas, modelling alternative approaches to agriculture and providing a secure source of local food (meat, eggs, vegetables, fruit, medicinal herbs), Sacred Earth is taking practical steps to rebuild bridges between local food and local community.

Therapeutic/health benefits

The World Health Organisation is predicting that [depression will be the biggest cause of death globally by 2030](#). This alarming rise can be attributed variously to the impacts of globalisation, the communications revolution, consumerism, increased poverty, work-related stress, social exclusion and alienation from nature. With our focus on building strong community connections and the health benefits of developing a deeper relationship with the natural world through a variety of ecotherapeutic techniques (including simply providing a quiet space for people to sit and observe nature or working in our garden), Sacred Earth is working to address a number of these important issues.



Meditating by the lake at Sacred Earth

Ecological/environmental benefits

At a time in history when we are facing the [Sixth Mass Extinction](#), providing secure habitats for plant and animal life needs to be a priority for all responsible land owners and land stewards. Through the careful application of sensitive land management and sustainable agricultural techniques, we are working to regenerate what was once a

polluted industrial site in order to create a flourishing and balanced ecosystem providing a home for countless plants, insects and animals.

Wickerwood Nature Reserve

Prior to our acquisition of the land in 2011 the abandoned brickworks was a popular spot for local ramblers and dog walkers to explore. The site has been closed to the public since then during which time it has been cleared of rubbish and regenerated. We're now approaching a stage in the project's evolution when we will once again be able to provide (limited) access to the general public, meaning that it will soon become a significant recreational resource for the local community as well as a carefully managed nature reserve.



A toad discovered living under an old piece of carpet in the herb garden

Approximately 7 acres of the our 40 acre site comprises an inaccessible wetland area which is the locus of the huge wealth of biodiversity which can be found on the land. Sacred Earth has reached the second stage of a [Veolia grant](#) application which, if successful, would result in funding to provide infrastructure such as boardwalks providing sensitive access to this area at the same time as opening the site to the public initially through the Friends of Wickerwood Nature Reserve scheme launching in 2017.

What is a Community Benefit Society?

As a Community Benefit Society, Sacred Earth Communities Ltd is a not-for-profit organisation, with any profits being re-invested in the business or used for the benefit of the community as a whole. It is registered with the Financial Conduct Authority (ref. no. TBC) under model rules provided by the Plunkett Foundation which are suitable for community enterprises such as ours (the rules can be [downloaded from our website](#)). Sacred Earth is wholly governed by its members via an elected Management Committee. The first committee comprises the previous CIC directors for continuity reasons who, at the Society's first AGM, will all stand down but put themselves forward for re-election by the members. All assets owned by Sacred Earth are locked into the Society and will be used solely for community benefit.

Under our Rules, the membership of Sacred Earth is made up of those who subscribe for at least one share. This is a special type of share, known as a "community share", which is specifically designed for community benefit purposes, and which can only be redeemed from the organisation itself, rather than being traded on the open market. Each member will have one vote, no matter how large or small their shareholding is. Each share in Sacred Earth is worth £50, with the maximum shareholding set by the founding Management Committee under the 2016 share offer being limited to £7,500 per individual shareholder to ensure a balanced membership. Shares retain their face value, and will be withdrawable upon application after five years, at the discretion of the Management Committee who shall also determine what proportion of total share capital can be withdrawn in any one year, bearing in mind the need for the various initiatives to become established, retaining prudent reserves, and for tax relief reasons.

Projects and initiatives

This section contains brief summaries of the various new projects and initiatives which our community share offer in September and other funding sources will be helping to support. Details of the amounts allocated to each of these projects and initiatives can be found in the *Finances and funding* section of this document.

More information about our new agro-forestry project, *Sacred Earth Biochar*, can be found in the next section. More information (including financial forecasts) about the the two new independent land projects we are supporting in 2016 (*Sacred Seeds Herbal Project* and *Hathor Farm*) can be found in the appendices at the end of this document.

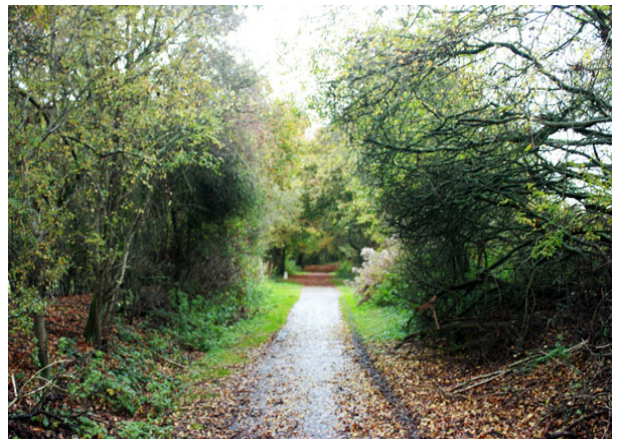
Sacred Earth projects and initiatives

Sacred Earth Biochar

The aim of this new enterprise is to produce a variety of char-based products using our existing kiln on our site in Horam, and sell these products to small, medium and large-scale growers using our website as a shopfront. The enterprise will be closely integrated with our woodland management strategy and include an apprenticeship scheme and educational programme. See the next section and [our website](#) for more information about this project.

Site accessibility improvements

Although we have direct vehicle access to the site via Horebeech Lane, our main access point for the public is on the Cuckoo Trail, a short walk or cycle from Horam public car park. Although there is a public bridleway which passes through the land, we've identified another location which will provide easier access. At this spot we plan to build a wooden entrance gate, notice board and "honesty box" for sale of Hathor Farm eggs and other produce and products. We'd also like to commission a set of wooden sign posts to enable visitors to navigate the site more easily.



The Cuckoo Trail sees 250,000 visitors every year

Online shop development

[Our new website](#) (launched in December 2015) is a key component in our marketing and sales strategy. We already have functionality in place which provides a basic booking facility for workshops and events. Our plan is to develop an online shop front which will enable us to process booking payments for events as well as provide a channel for direct sales of Sacred Earth products including biochar, Sacred Seeds and Hathor Farm products and other handmade items produced by members of Sacred Earth's extended community – e.g. willow baskets, carved wooden spoons and bowls, knapped flint tools.

Ecotherapy

Sacred Earth is keen to support the emerging field of [Ecotherapy](#), particularly with regard to tackling [nature-deficit disorder](#) (through our Earth Steward Apprenticeship and other educational programmes) and encouraging counselling in the outdoors, animal-assisted and horticultural therapy to take place on the land. We're working with [Oliver Bettany](#) (a counsellor and ecotherapist) to develop this aspect of our vision. Initially this will involve the construction of a dedicated ecotherapy space (probably a large willow dome) in a quiet corner of the land - an outdoor therapy space which will be rented by Oliver and other nature-oriented practitioners in the area for one-to-one and group therapy sessions.



A willow dome like the one we intend to build at Sacred Earth

Adopt a nut tree scheme

As part of our aim to foster greater resilience in our local food network in the future, over the last few years we have planted a number of fruit and nut trees on the land. We're planning to purchase a number of infant walnut and sweet chestnut trees with funds we will be receiving as part of our fundraising activities in 2016. This new grove of nut trees will be set aside for our "Adopt a nut tree" scheme - an agricultural, social and educational project focused on getting families involved in agriculture and thinking about issues such as food miles and food sovereignty. In financial terms, the aim of the scheme is to cover some of the costs of purchasing the trees in the first place.

Woodland crafts area

The preservation of rural crafts is an important objective for Sacred Earth, an aspect of our educational and social aims. As a result of industrialisation and globalisation (amongst other factors) skills which have been handed down for centuries are in danger of being lost, an issue which is increasingly receiving recognition. Consequently there is a renewed interest in learning these skills, a workshop market which we're keen to capitalise on. We plan to build a woodland crafts area and invite a variety of craftspeople to come and teach workshops throughout the year, potentially generating a significant income for the organisation.



Bow making on the ESA year course for teenagers

Growing endangered and "at risk" herbs (in partnership with Sacred Seeds)

Our resident herbalist Alice Bettany has a particular interest in growing endangered and "at risk" herbs in the garden at Sacred Earth, primarily in order to establish a sustainable source of important medicinal herbs which are in danger of being wiped out. Additionally, sales of these herbs (fresh, dried or in tincture form) to other herbalists will provide a useful secondary income for Alice and a small additional income for Sacred Earth. We're planning to make a bulk purchase of Goldenseal rootlets which, once established, can be responsibly harvested every year to be used in Sacred Seeds herbal products or sold via the website.

New independent projects we are supporting on the land

Sacred Seeds Herbal Project

Sacred Seeds is a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) project focusing on the development of a medicinal herb garden at our Horam site. The project will be funded and promoted via a quarterly herbal box which contains seasonal herbal remedies created by their team of qualified herbalists as well as information about the products for adults and children. They will also host regular volunteer days, community events and workshops on the land and elsewhere. See Appendix 2 and the [Sacred Seeds website](#) for more information.

Hathor Farm

Hathor Farm will keep heritage breed pigs, chickens and sheep and sell produce directly to the customer. The produce will consist of meat, eggs and potentially wool/fleeces. Both the land and the animals will be cared for according to biodynamic principles. They will also run occasional workshops throughout the year which focus on biodynamic farming methods and animal care. See Appendix 3 and the [Sacred Earth website](#) for more information.

Existing independent projects on the land

Annemarie O'Sullivan – Artist and willow basketmaker

Annemarie grows willow for her basketmaking business and runs workshops at Sacred Earth. Alongside her own crowdfunding campaign, Annemarie received funding from the Arts Council to run a collaborative arts project called *Making Ground* with ceramicist Elaine Bolt at Sacred Earth in 2016. See [Annemarie's website](#) for more information.

Sacred Earth Biochar

The aim of this new enterprise is to produce a variety of char-based products (our *Earth Elixirs* range) using our existing kiln on our site in Horam, and sell these products to small, medium and large-scale growers using our website as a shopfront. The enterprise will be closely integrated with our woodland management strategy and include an apprenticeship scheme and educational programme.

Our vision is to create a closed loop system with waste by-products to not only make char, but transform it into a saleable, highly carbonised soil product for our local and national soils. The biochar process sequesters carbon, methane and nitrogen in the ground, mitigating against climate change, and has the ability to increase fertility and improve soil structure and conditions. We feel the time is right to ignite a conscious effort locally, nationally and globally to reinstate and empower the connection between agriculture and woodland ownership. We hope to achieve this aim not only through biochar production and sales but also through educational programmes and practical workshops which demonstrate how to create and use biochar as a resource to improve soil fertility and combat climate change.



Tarric, one of our Biochar technicians, stood beside our kiln during a char burn

Practical aspects of the project

Our existing kiln produces 150kg of char per burn. A single burn requires a 2 person team working together for 4-5 hours over a 2 day period. Sacred Earth can meet our own Biochar needs from 6 burns. In our first year we plan to do 3 commercial burns producing 450kg of char (2,250kg of saleable product). Our aim is to do an additional 24 commercial burns per year (2 per month) by Year 6/7 which we consider to be maximum capacity for a two person team using our existing kiln, producing around 3,000kg of char and 16,000kg of saleable product, of which Biochar content is approximately 18%. Other constituents of our products include organic compost (80%) and our *Earth Elixir* mix - a Biodynamic preparation (2%).

The waste wood used to make Biochar is a free resource. A significant proportion of the waste wood needed to produce these amounts of Biochar will come from coppiced trees in our own woodland. The rest will come from a other woodlands in the area, including nearby Laughton woods which includes a 200 acre community woodland which is also in the process of becoming a Community Benefit Society.

Labour is the main overhead for the project. The table in the next page illustrates how effective training and management of the team and increasing production over the first five years results in an "economy of scale" which moves the initiative steadily in the direction of profitability. Once we've trained and established our Biochar team (Year 2) we estimate that while sales will steadily increase, no associated increase in labour investment will be required until Year 6 when production levels reach a point that cannot be sustained by a two person team.

Earth Elixirs range of products

Our *Earth Elixirs* range of products enable customers to experience the benefits of using Biochar in their gardens without the fuss of preparing a Biochar mix themselves. Initially we will sell only three basic products (all organic compost/biochar mixes for various different uses, such as a seedling compost mix), but once established we will increase our range to include additional products such as comfrey and nettle tea mixtures and tree gift packs (an infant native oak or ash tree and our special tree inoculator mix).



Biochar human resource allocation strategy

		Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		Year 4		Year 5	
Job role	Day rate	Days (p.a.)	Annual total	Days (p.a.)	Annual total	Days (p.a.)	Annual total	Days (p.a.)	Annual total	Days (p.a.)	Annual total
Manager	£150	50	£7,500	25	£3,750	25	£3,750	25	£3,750	25	£3,750
Technician	£120	–	–	50	£6,000	50	£6,000	50	£12,000	50	£12,000
Apprentice	£45	50	£2,250	50	£2,250	50	£2,250	50	£2,250	50	£4,500
Total labour		100	£9,750	125	£12,000	125	£12,000	125	£12,000	125	£12,000
Total other costs			£2,319		£2,650		£3,029		£3,972		£5,719
Saleable product produced			2,250 kg		3,150 kg		4,410 kg		6,174 kg		8,643 kg
Labour cost in saleable product per kg			£4.33		£3.81		£2.72		£1.94		£1.39
Revenue			£7,492		£10,489		£14,685		£20,559		£28,783

Market research and marketing

Biochar is an eco-friendly “wonder product” of which there is relatively little awareness in the UK outside of a relatively niche community of organic farmers. If we can effectively introduce the product to a wider network of farmers and gardeners, we see a growing market which we can capitalise on. There are less than 6 producers of Biochar-based products in the UK. [Carbon Gold](#), the UK's leading producer, has proven that, alongside commercial sales, grants for soil research programmes can offer a significant revenue stream. The British Biochar Foundation, of which we are a member, have highlighted up to [55 different uses for Biochar](#), many of which offer relatively untapped markets. For example, see [this article on the Telegraph website](#) for information about using Biochar to treat ash tree dieback and other tree diseases.

During the initial stages of the project we will focus on creating a local market through word of mouth, partnerships and targeted local advertising. We will slowly build a national market through our website and social media channels, national advertising in magazines like Resurgence, Living Woods, Small Holders, Star and Furrow and Farmers Weekly, as well as online advertising using Facebook. To maximise our profit margins we intend to focus on direct sales via the shopfront on our website, through our own community network, training events and events run by other organisations in our network (Transition Camp, Seedy Sunday etc), partnership sales with the BDA (Biodynamic Association), farmers market stalls in Heathfield and Lewes and the 12 parish garden clubs in the Wealden area.

Secondary sales will be made through indirect distribution via organisations like Hankham Organics (veg box scheme with over 600 customers, wholesale to Harvest Organics and local garden centres in Horam and Wyevale). Additional opportunities to raise revenue include grant funding for research trials at Boarshead Dairy Farm (Kent), Waldron Farm (a family run dairy farm near Horam) and Harebeating Lane Farm (a family run dairy farm near Hailsham).

Finance and funding

We have been operating solvently since 2011, during which time we have received a number of agricultural grants (see sub-section *Funding investment to date*, on page 17 below) and an income from our education programmes which have enabled us to grow at a steady rate. Our current financial position is good. Our accounts can be [downloaded from our website](#). Our financial year begins on 1st July.

In the following pages you will find a budget covering projections for the next five years which includes our revenue streams as well as the start-up capital requirements for new equipment and revenue funding. Please note that references in this section which appear in square brackets (e.g. [A2], [B4], [C6] etc.) refer to rows in the *Profit and loss [A]*, *Equipment and infrastructure [B]* and *Revenue costs [C]* tables on pages 17-19 below.

Sacred Earth generates/will generate income from:

- Biochar sales
- Education programmes
- Workshops
- Rent
- Profit sharing scheme

Our new Biochar initiative and our established and expanding education programmes are the two income streams with the most potential as *Table A* on page 17 demonstrates. As has been mentioned elsewhere in this document, we see these streams as supporting our work with fledgling rural businesses and other social/community-oriented aspects of Sacred Earth, and as a way to wean the organisation away from grant dependency.

Community share withdrawal

Due to the losses we are forecasting over the next couple of years until we achieve grant independence, community shares purchased during our share offer in September (and any subsequent share offers) will not be withdrawable until Year 6 (commencing on 1st July 2021) and only then under the conditions detailed in our model rules (available to [download from our website](#)). Share withdrawals will be capped at 10% of share capital per year.

Key Performance Indicators

Our assumptions about the factors affecting financial performance such as customer numbers, sales value and overheads will form Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and we will use these to monitor our progress.

Trading performance

Our net loss of £29,765 in Year 1 can be directly attributed to our "start up" revenue funding requirements - salaries for Sacred Earth Biochar [A11] as well as project management and administration running costs [A12] for the newly formed Sacred Earth Community Benefit Society. This loss is mitigated in Year 1 through funding we are in the process of securing via the Just Growth programme and our community share offer. See sub-section on *Current investment and sources of funding* below and section on *Revenue costs* on page 19 for more information.

Our positive projections of 40% annual growth of Sacred Earth Biochar [A1] are based on our confidence that this is a product which the market is primed for. Similarly, our projections for the growth of the education side of the organisation (25% annual growth over the next five years) are similarly confident, based on our experience in the sector, our appreciation that nature-based education has quickly increased in popularity in recent years and the fact that this is a market we are only just beginning to tap into.

Current investment and sources of funding

We have identified the investment funding required and sources of funding in Year 1 to make our plan happen, a detailed breakdown of which is shown in *Table B* and *Table C* below. We're aiming to reach a funding total of **£70,000**, which breaks down as follows:

- **£15,000** - Grant from [Just Growth](#) (FEA Network)
- **£15,000** - Loan from [CCF](#) (*Co-operative and Community Finance*)
- **£40,000** - Community investment (*via a community share offer running in September*)

See the *Projects and initiatives* section (page 11) for more information about the various projects which these funds are being allocated to.

Grant funding

Our social, educational and environmental aims are a good fit with the mission of a number of foundations and grant awarding bodies such as the Veolia Environmental Trust, the Lloyds Bank Foundation, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation Youth Fund and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Our grant dependency as an organisation reduces steadily over the five years this forecast covers, as a direct result of the growth we're predicting in our Biochar initiative and our education streams. During the first three years of this five year period we will secure funding to cover this shortfall. In Year 1 this funding will come from the Just Growth programme and via our community share offer which is running in September. For more information about where we're looking for funding in Year 2 and beyond see the sub-section on *Future investment sought* below.

Because of the educational nature of a significant proportion of the work we do, we anticipate we will continue to apply for and win additional grant funding for new projects above and beyond what our forecasts indicate we need to secure in order to meet our revenue requirements.

Funding investment to date

<i>Year</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Details</i>
2011	£30,000	Set-up grant from Roger Ross via the Biodynamic Association
2012 – 2016	£5,000 per year over four years	Affinity Sutton Housing Association and partnership fund managers for educational nature connection programme at Warden Park Primary Academy
2015	£17,000	Private donation via the Biodynamic Association for increased support for infrastructure/project management and land project development

Future investment sought

In addition to the annual grant we receive from Affinity Sutton Housing Association [A6], we are confident of receiving additional grants from at least one of the following bodies to support our revenue requirements in Years 2-5 as we work towards grant independence:

- *Biffa Award*: Conservation and ecology grant, working with local partnership groups
- *Heritage Lottery Fund*: Youth and young adult land learner scheme (£100,000 minimum) – Three year programme
- *Princes Countryside Fund*: Second young entrant farmer support /joint partnership funding
- *Esmee Fairbairn Foundation*: local farm house/increased land acquisition support
- *Awards for All*: young adults in conservation and introduction to land management practices support (£10,000)
- *Veolia Environmental Trust*: support for our environmental and community aims (up to £75,000)

Table A: Profit and loss (Years 1-5)

Row no.	Profit and loss	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Notes
A1	Sacred Earth Biochar	£7,492	£10,489	£14,685	£20,559	£28,783	40% annual increase
A2	Education	£21,170	£26,462	£33,078	£41,347	£51,684	25% annual increase
A3	Workshops	£2,500	£3,125	£3,906	£4,882	£6,103	25% annual increase
A4	Total trading income	£31,162	£40,077	£51,669	£66,789	£86,571	
A5	Rents	£3,900	£5,000	£5,425	£6,171	£7,423	
A6	Revenue grants	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000	Affinity Sutton annual grant
A7	Donations	£500	£575	£661	£760	£874	15% annual increase
A8	Profit sharing scheme	--	--	£1,000	£1,100	£1,210	10% annual increase from Year 3 onwards
A9	Total income	£40,562	£50,652	£63,755	£74,821	£96,079	
	Direct costs and overheads						
A10	Biochar production and sales costs	£2,497	£2,799	£3,223	£3,817	£4,648	Increase based on production levels
A11	Salaries (Biochar) *	£9,750	£12,000	£12,600	£13,230	£13,891	5% increase, Year 3 onwards
A12	Salaries (Overall project management/other) †	£27,450	£9,250	£12,025	£15,632	£20,322	Drop after Year 1 followed by 30% annual increase
A13	Education/workshop contractors	£16,569	£17,752	£18,492	£23,115	£28,894	70% total revenue from education in Year 1 dropping to 50% in Year 3
A14	Overheads	£13,009	£14,120	£15,412	£16,924	£18,708	5% annual increase
A15	Total direct costs and overheads	£69,275	£55,922	£61,753	£72,719	£86,464	
A16	Depreciation	£1,053	£1,053	£1,053	£1,053	£1,053	
A17	Net profit/loss inc. depreciation ‡	£29,765	£6,324	£949	£1,048	£8,561	Losses appear in red

* See "Biochar human resource allocation strategy" table on page 14 for further explanation of Sacred Earth Biochar salary allocation during Years 1-5

† See "Revenue costs" section on page 19 for further explanation of overall project management salary allocation during Years 1-5

‡ See "Trading performance" sub-section on page 15 and "Grant funding" sub-section on page 16 for an account of our predicted losses in Year 1-2 and how we plan to ameliorate them.

A spreadsheet featuring a ten year financial forecast is available upon request.

How the funding will be allocated

Approximately half of the £70,000 funding we aim to generate in 2016 is designated to revenue funding which is critical for the establishment and maintenance of a strong management and administrative base for the new CBS as well as supporting start-up costs for our Biochar initiative. See *Table C* below for full details of our revenue costs in Year 1.

We have identified a minimum target of £60,000 in order to carry out this business plan (with minor adjustments). See *Table B* for details of the equipment and infrastructure we will be investing in, including how we will restructure our budget if we only achieve our minimum target of £60,000. If we reach our maximum funding target of £80,000, (i.e. £50,000 in community shares plus grant/loan) this will improve our working capital position and enable us to move more swiftly onto future projects.

Table B: Equipment and infrastructure (Years 1-2)

Item no.	Name	Description	Investment	
			£70K funding	£60K funding
B1	Winter housing for cattle/sheep	Rammed earth/straw bale construction, includes main housing/corral fencing/ rain catchment for water system	£1,800	£1,800
B2	General access improvement	Re-surfacing main access track	£3,000	£3,000
B3	Public access improvement	Visitor entrance gate on Cuckoo Trail, signage and honesty box area (for sales of eggs and other produce)	£450	£450
B4	Water system and storage	Includes additional piping/water and rain catchment development/oxygenation processes/increased storage system	£1,000	£1,000
B5	Fencing costs	Wood processing/wire/attachments/electricity installations for crop/livestock care	£1,200	£1,200
B6	Stall	Farmers market/events stall set up equipment	£1,000	£1,000
B7	Compact tractor	Second hand, plus up to nine attachments	£7,000	£7,000
B8	Water turbine system	To harness electricity from our dam overflow	£5,000	--
B9	Solar panels	For water pump	£800	--
B10	Marketing budget	Advertising (including national advertisement), online marketing and marketing events	£3,000	£2000
B11	Website development	Includes website development (online shop for sales of produce/courses)	£1,500	£1,175
B12	Ecotherapy space	Willow dome (materials and construction)	£500	£500
B13	Signage	General signage throughout site	£500	£500
B14	Bulk purchase of Goldenseal rootlet	For increasing endangered herb species	£325	--
B15	Extraction fan for poly-tunnel	For drying herbs	£225	£225
B16	Walnut and Sweet Chestnut Grove	For community "Adopt a nut tree" project	£2,000	--
B17	Woodland crafts area	2 x pole lathes, draw horses, cleave breaks, selection of tools	£2,000	£2,000
B18	Contingency fund		£1,500	£1000
B19	Total		£32,800	£22,800

Revenue costs

Our revenue costs in Year 1 are considerable due to the significance of the transition process we are undergoing to become a Community Benefit Society (see page 9 for more information) and the increase in the capacity and reach of the organisation as a result of this transition. We're reaching for a higher rung of the ladder and therefore during this initial phase we're investing significant revenue in putting in place sales, marketing, administrative and project management processes and practices which will enable us to begin operating at this new level, as well as implementing a number of agricultural initiatives which are necessary for the development of the land project as a whole.

After this first year of increased investment and activity during which time we will establish processes which will increase our efficiency as an organisation, our project management and administration requirements will reduce as a result of this increased efficiency while the revenue costs for Sacred Earth Biochar will increase in-line with sales and production [A11]. Due to the growth we're predicting in both our Biochar and education streams, we anticipate that our project management and administration needs will quickly ramp up, hence our estimate of 30% annual growth in these costs between Years 2-5 [A12].

The cost of employing a part-time farmer in Years 2-5 are not included in our projections since many of the duties attached to this role can be carried out by the Land Project Manager. We will seek specific agricultural funding for this role (most likely via the Biodynamic Association) if we feel it is necessary to maintain this role.

Table C: Revenue costs (Year 1)

<i>Item no.</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Time allocation (per week)</i>	<i>Wage (per annum) *</i>
<i>C1</i>	Part-time Farmer	Responsible for implementation of land-based project initiatives working closely with the Land Project Manager	1 day	£6,500
<i>C2</i>	Land Project Manager	Responsible for project management of Sacred Earth Biochar and overall land management	2 days	£15,600
<i>C3</i>	Land Apprentice	Trainee Biochar technician and land steward apprentice for a young adult, aged 18-24. Training in Biochar and compost processing, land stewardship and woodland management	2 days	£4,700
<i>C4</i>	Communications Manager	Online and offline communication and marketing project manager, business process development	1 day	£5,200
<i>C5</i>	Project Administrator	Social media channel manager, administrative support for Land Project Manager and Communication Manager	1 day	£5,200
<i>C6</i>	Total			£37,200

* *Sacred Earth currently does not currently operate an employee PAYE scheme. Instead we operate a simple contractor-based payment process. Core members of the Sacred Earth team are treated as contractors and paid a day rate (in the same way as the external contractors who make up some of our education team for example). Therefore the wages in the table above reflect a competitive freelance day rate of between £100-150 per day as opposed to a pro rata salary.*

Marketing and operations

The management committee is made up of members of the existing team, other key stakeholders and independent professionals. Because of their commitment to the aims and values of the organisation as a whole, as well as the skills and experience they bring to the table, Alice (Sacred Seeds), Emile (Hathor Farm) and Oliver (Ecotherapist) have been given positions on the management committee of the newly formed Sacred Earth Community Benefit Society. They add their own unique flavours to a management committee which is diverse in background, personality, skills and experience.

Land ownership

Roger Ross is a Sussex-based philanthropist and social activist who supports a variety of grassroots land projects in the area as well as making regular donations to larger charities. Roger has a particularly close relationship with Sacred Earth and his decision to join the CBS management committee reflects this. Roger is the current owner of our 40 acre Horam site which he is leasing to Sacred Earth on a long term basis with a peppercorn rent. Despite being an active member of the Sacred Earth community, he is not involved in the day to day management of the project and he is very clear in his intention to put the land into trust at an appropriate time, once the dust has settled on the organisational transition we're currently undergoing.

Management and people

Key roles on the Sacred Earth CBS management committee will be filled by the following people:

- Chair Person - Oliver Bettany
- Secretary - Jo Higgs
- Treasurer - Philip Greenwood



Sacred Earth team meeting in the woods with Permaculture Designer Peter Cow



Sacred Earth landowner Roger Ross and Sacred Seeds' Alice Bettany exploring the permaculture garden at Roger's home

Representing various community roles and projects, the Sacred Earth management committee will be completed by:

- Victoria Mew – Education
- Alice Bettany – Sacred Seeds Herbal Project
- Emile Webber – Head Farmer
- Roger Ross – Land Owner
- Mark Gilbert – Health and Safety/Education
- Suzy Greenwood – Health/Wellbeing

Board members skills and experience

Oliver Bettany – Chair Person

- Humanistic counsellor and ecotherapist (PG Dip, MBACP)
- Web developer/designer/project manager (17 years experience working commercially, 8 years in the charity sector)
- Environmental campaigning/activism (5 years experience of campaign/event organising, group facilitation, consensus decision making)
- Permaculture design (PDC certification)
- BA (Hons) Multimedia Production

Jo Higgs – Secretary

Engagement and facilitation in diverse communities, project development and project management, senior management in public sector organisations, financial management, innovation and mainstreaming community initiatives.

- Community empowerment and engaging diverse communities in adaptation to climate change in urban and rural settings
- Designing and delivering education and personal development projects for disadvantaged communities
- Project management of a programme of capital and revenue regeneration projects
- Currently a trustee for the National Flood Forum, a national charity representing and supporting communities affected by flood risk
- Experience of supporting the development of community groups and developing community forums
- Incident management including community flood recovery, emergency planning and strategic communications during incident response
- Delivering high profile projects and engagement

Philip Greenwood - Treasurer

Cultural Creative Entrepreneur, Nature Facilitator and Guide, Earth Steward and Conservation Consultant, Project Manager, Teacher and Social/Cultural Activist

- 16 years of nature facilitating and teaching, with children, teens and adults
- Trained in Biodynamic Agriculture, Horticulture and Arboriculture
- 5 years direct experience in project management and business leadership/management
- 2 years training in deep nature therapy for individuals and group facilitation
- Experienced Wilderness Guide

Victoria Mew – Education

- 16 years of training in primitive survival skills, nature connection and cultural regeneration, with 10 years experience delivering such programmes for others (ages 3 years to elders)
- Qualified Forest School L3 practitioner
- Completion of 2 year full-time “in service” Steiner teacher training at Michael Hall School
- Interdisciplinary study into Nature Deficit Disorder through Human Sciences course at UCL (BSc Hons)
- Event co-ordination for 3 years for a week long annual event with up to 250 people with 6 concurrent programmes

Alice Bettany – Sacred Seeds Herbal Project

- Qualified Western Herbalist and Naturopath
- 6 years experience managing Wowo Campsite, now manages Workshops at Wowo
- 8 years experience organising Transition Camp annually as part of the Transition Towns movement
- Runs foraging and wild medicine workshops for adults and children
- Forest school mentor, home school teacher
- Medicinal plant grower

Suzanna Greenwood – Community Health and Wellbeing

- 15 years experience as a Chartered Physiotherapist, Yoga Teacher and Complementary Therapist
- 10 years experience running and teaching at Yoga and nature-based retreats
- 20 years of personal experience of Yoga, meditation and mindfulness practices
- Currently training to become a Life Coach, specialising in health and wellbeing
- Currently working as an Integrative Physiotherapist at a local GP surgery which is also an Integrative Health Centre

Mark Gilbert – Health and Safety / Education

- Qualified bushcraft instructor
- Learning disability job coach and mentor
- Historical European Martial Arts instructor
- Supported Internship Project coordinator at Plumpton College
- Employment advisor
- Event organiser
- Qualified first aid trainer
- IT help desk supervisor

Roger Ross – Land Owner

- Successful business owner
- Passionate environmentalist
- Pioneer investor in Charity Bank
- Committed to organic and biodynamic agriculture
- Member of 'A Band of Brothers'
- WWOOF host at Rodmell Food Forest
- Keen interest in social justice

Emile Webber – Head Farmer

- General livestock management (pigs, sheep, cattle, chickens)
- Experience with lambing/calving/farrowing/hatching
- Milking
- Fencing
- Land management
- Tractor driving (topping, raking, tedding, baling, carting)

Making it happen

Project management next steps

June to August 2016

During this period the CIC to CBS transition process will take place and we will be assessed for our Just Growth loan. We will also be focusing a lot of energy on preparing for our share offer and crowdfunding campaign, including shooting and editing our crowdfunding video and producing our share offer documentation. We will also be beginning to implement a local outreach strategy in order to engage more effectively with the local Horam community.

Also during this period some of our focus will naturally shift away from office-based project management towards more practical, land management tasks, although a significant amount of planning for the community share offer in September will still be necessary, such as working with our core supporters and partners in order to plan an effective campaign and building excitement on social media and other channels about what is about to happen. All our land projects will be building momentum and our wwoofers and volunteer days will be running on a weekly basis. Our ESA year course will be in full flow and we will be scheduling in a number of Biochar burns for our commercial production, having produced enough for our own needs during the Spring period.

September to December 2016

Our share offer campaign will take place in September, including our first official open day to the public as a Community Benefit Society, an event focused on local residents. Once we've reached our share offer target, we will be able to utilise the funds the campaign has generated and also draw down on the grant and loan components in order to action some of our infrastructure aims, specifically in relation to bringing renewable energy systems online and purchasing a tractor. The ESA year course will be reaching its conclusion. We will begin to implement our *Sacred Earth Biochar* sales and marketing strategy and recruit an apprentice to work with our land manager on the Biochar initiative and other land-based projects. This period will also hopefully provide us with an opportunity to reflect on the year long planning process which concluded with the share offer.

January – June 2017

During this period we anticipate *Sacred Seeds* and *Hathor Farm* will be hitting their stride and will therefore require less project management support. This may be a natural time to refocus some energy on our education projects. We will be also be exploring new funding opportunities. The introduction of livestock into our land management strategy will be underway. By the end of this period we hope our land apprentice will take over most Biochar-related operations and our sales and marketing strategy will be beginning to bear fruit in terms of increased sales. Full monitoring and evaluation of projects will be ongoing with Coventry University and we hope our participation in the *Just Growth* programme will be deemed successful enough to provide an excellent case study for other similar projects coming through the programme.

Project timeline for the next 12 months

September

- Community share offer
- Open day (focused on local community)
- Sacred Seeds autumn herb box goes out

October

- Funds become available from Just Growth, CCF and share offer
- Recruitment of land apprentice
- Land and project management roles commence (Land Manager, Communications Manager, Project Administrator and Part-time Farmer)

- Online shop development project commences
- Earth Steward Apprenticeship "Quest" takes place
- Purchase of stall, compact tractor

November

- Purchase of nut trees and community tree planting day
- Construct winter housing for cattle/sheep
- Begin implementation of *Sacred Earth Biochar* sales and marketing strategy, including local and national advertising
- Purchase of tools for and construction of woodland craft area
- Implementation of water turbine system

December

- Sacred Seeds winter herb box goes out
- Winter equinox newsletter promoting 2017 programmes of workshops and events
- Planning application for Nissan hut

January

- Completion of poly-tunnel including implementation of extraction fan for drying herbs

February

- Construction of willow dome for ecotherapy space
- Construction of Cuckoo Trail entrance gate and signage for site
- Access improvements (main track)
- Construction of Nissan hut
- Purchase/planting of Goldenseal rootlets

March

- Sacred Seeds spring herb box goes out
- Spring Equinox community day on the land
- Annual programme of workshops commences
- Ecotherapy space completion/opening

April

- ESA course commences
- Annual Walden Park Primary Academy project commences

May

- Beltane celebration and activity day for community share offer contributors

June

- First AGM of Sacred Earth Community Benefit Society
- Sacred Seeds summer herb box goes out
- Sacred Earth financial year end

Risk factors and mitigation

Below is an outline of the various risks we perceive to Sacred Earth as a whole in the coming years and the ways we propose to mitigate them, under four headings: *Access to land*, *Financial risks*, *Project collapse* and *Management committee*.

Access to land

Our 40 acre site in Horam is currently owned by Sussex-based philanthropist Roger Ross, a good friend of the organisation who is to become a member of the management committee of Sacred Earth CBS. If for some reason we were to lose access to the site we would be unable to deliver our new land projects, provide access to land for others or meet our wider educational and community aims: the land is at the heart of everything we're doing.

Mitigations

We have agreed a 20 year lease (with peppercorn rent) with Roger Ross, an agreement which will continue in a similar form when the land is placed into some form of land trust. This verbal agreement with Roger has recently been updated into a written/legal agreement. It is proposed that the land will go into safe keeping with the Biodynamic Land Trust with a long term lease for Sacred Earth. Additionally, the independent land projects we support (Sacred Seeds, Hathor Farm etc.) have their own written sub-tenancy agreements in place, based on ten year leases at a manageable rent.

Financial risks

Historically Sacred Earth has been dependent on external funding streams which have provided us with the financial support necessary to deliver our aims and objectives. A significant cause for concern relates to these funding streams drying up due to global economic uncertainty and the impact of austerity measures imposed at a national level, as well as other factors. Approximately half of the £70,000 funding we aim to generate in 2016 is designated to revenue funding which is critical for the establishment and maintenance of a strong management and administrative base for the new CBS. We will need to attract significant amounts of revenue funding in the coming years in order for us to continue meeting these needs. Finally, there is a financial risk associated with the repayment of the loan which is part of the Just Growth funding package (£15,000 over 10 years at 8% APR).

Mitigations

We have a plan to be grant independent in five years, primarily through the expansion of our education offering and our new Biochar initiative. There are significant funding opportunities which we are yet to explore (see *Future investment sought* sub-section on page 16) as we are only just emerging from our infancy into a more growth orientated phase of development as an organisation, meaning we are now eligible for certain funding pots for the first time. Over the next few years we should be able to maximise this potential as the land projects bear fruit, our ability to outreach to the community increases and our human resources and skill-sets are expanded in line with our growth as an organisation.

Regarding the £15,000 loan we will be receiving from CCF, we have a strong, viable plan to pay this back over a 10 year loan repayment period. Annual rent charged as part of the individual land project lease agreements will make a significant contribution towards the loan repayments, and other income streams will generate the rest. In the past we have reinvested profits from Sacred Earth's educational projects into our land projects, enabling us to offset some of higher levels of risk of these projects. This is something we will continue to do if necessary. We also have the option of applying for government and woodland subsidies which could cover our basic (but significant) annual land management costs.

Project collapse

As is the norm with this type of endeavour, unforeseen human factors represent a considerable risk. Projects come under significant strain and risk of collapse when key stakeholders decide to withdraw for any number of reasons – i.e. ill health, relationship challenges, unforeseen circumstances etc. Relationship challenges in particular

(i.e. members of the core team falling out with one another) have been identified by experts in social permaculture as the main reason that co-operative land projects fail.

Mitigations

To ease this risk, we have ensured almost all infrastructure is owned as an asset lock by Sacred Earth, ensuring that if one particular part of the overall project fails or a stakeholder decides to leave, the infrastructure is still there for someone else to pick up the banner and continue in a new or similar form. We have also ensured that the projects are diverse and complementary and that the health and flexibility of our working relationships (and therefore the resilience of our community) is prioritised in order that we can support one another in the event of illness/family circumstances/time out. This includes a monthly check in for the core team which focuses not only on addressing practical and project management issues but also contains a forum for exploring and resolving interpersonal tensions using nonviolent communication techniques.

Additionally all land project leaders are encouraged to foster good relationships with support workers who can step in if needed. We have found that this approach has worked well in our educational projects and the same procedures and processes can be easily applied to the land projects.

Management committee

There is a risk that key members of the management committee will resign or be voted off the committee by shareholders at the Annual General Meeting.

Mitigations

We propose a flexible approach to organising our management committee, regularly rotating key positions in order to engender a culture of shared responsibility, ensure diversity of leadership styles, skills and experience and enable all voices to be heard. Key decisions will be made by consensus and clear channels will be put in place in order to communicate effectively with project stakeholders and community shareholders so that all interested parties have a say when these decisions need to be made. We also aim to put in place robust voting procedures at both a management committee and shareholder level. How we implement these various processes will be tempered by our understanding of the importance of maintaining the autonomy and effectiveness of committee members and project leaders.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Sacred Earth Vision Statement

We are part of a globalised consumer culture which plunders natural resources without due consideration for the long-term effects on individuals, communities and the planet on which we live. Consequently, our physical and mental wellbeing, our environment, our ecological systems and our food, water and resource supplies are under serious threat.

In response to this threat, we are “thinking globally and acting locally” as guardians and caretakers of the 40 acres of mixed arable, pasture, and woodland which we have been gifted, in order to preserve and maintain it for community use and land-based social enterprises and rural micro industries.

We are creating a space where people can come together regardless of age, cultural background, knowledge and health – a space in which our connection to the earth, to nature, to Self and to others can be explored and expressed. A place where skills are shared and curiosity and understanding are nurtured. A place where each individual can contribute their gifts to the collective wellbeing. A place where people can build strong and lasting relationships, not only with other people, but also with the plants and animals with whom we share the land.

We hold a vision of a place where the degradation of soil and decline of species is reversed, where the presence of humans on the land fosters the diversification of species and enrichment of the environment. A place which helps forge the bridges necessary for people to work effectively together to deal with the crises facing our communities, where learning in all its forms – verbal, physical, logical, sensory, solitary and social – can form a foundation for the growth of sustainable and resilient communities.

We are establishing Community Supported projects based on permaculture, organic and biodynamic methods and principles. As well as becoming a working farm, we want to create an education centre that will offer courses in sustainable food cultivation and land stewardship, as well as providing abundant opportunities for visitors to connect with the land and learn through direct, sensory experience about nature awareness, conservation, ecology, wildlife, woodland, wetland and agricultural management.

Appendix 2 - Sacred Seeds Herbal Project

Project Summary

A Community Supported Agriculture project focusing on the development of a medicinal herb garden at our Horam site. The project will be funded and promoted via a quarterly herbal box which contains seasonal herbal remedies created by our team of qualified herbalists as well as information about the products for adults and children. We will also host regular volunteer days, community events and workshops on the land and elsewhere.

Mission statement

We believe that as a culture we have not yet managed to find a healthy balance between modern medicine and holistic healthcare. Our vision is to support greater integration between these complementary approaches to healthcare.

Through our herbal box scheme which contains seasonal herbal remedies as well as instructions on how to recreate the products at home, we hope to make a significant contribution towards our vision of a more resilient, localised and natural healthcare system.

We believe it of the utmost importance to inspire our children to become guardians of the natural world. In the words of Sir David Attenborough, "No one will protect what they don't care about; and no one will care about what they have never experienced." Therefore our herb boxes will contain ideas for ways in which parents can engage their children in games and activities which enable them to engage in the natural world and learn how to identify the abundant and diverse medicinal plants that surround us.

It is also an important part of our mission to raise awareness of issues of sustainability affecting herbal medicine and tackle these issues by growing a wide range of specialist medicinals in the herb garden on the Horam site. Therefore, the development and maintenance of a community herb garden, a growing and teaching space supported by volunteers and accessible to everyone, is central to our vision.

Land requirements

- Fenced area approx one third of an acre in size
- Poly tunnel
- Indoor drying space (Nissan Hut)
- Tools storage

Land rental agreement with Sacred Earth

- Year One, Two and Three - £400
- Year Four - £450
- Year Five onwards - £500

Market research and marketing

Our market research indicates that there is high demand for "health and wellbeing" mail order products like ours, with new box schemes in London selling super foods and organic beauty products and more locally a "Lewes Hamper" featuring produce from local small businesses. There are numerous successful businesses using the herbal CSA model in the USA. There is currently only one other herb box scheme in the UK, based in Somerset. There are similar schemes now starting up in Milton Keynes and Devon. Based on an extensive price comparison survey we undertook we feel we are very competitively priced (£55 per quarterly box with a discount for annual subscription). Thanks to our large network of friends and existing supporters we already have reservations for half of our initial run of 20 boxes in June 2016. The idea has been well received by the majority of people we spoke to during initial rounds of networking and PR activity undertaken in 2015/16.

[Our website](#), email newsletter and social media channels are central to our marketing strategy. Our newsletter subscription list is growing and we post to Facebook, Twitter and Instagram on a daily basis. Feedback on these channels indicates a clear interest in Sacred Seeds in general and the box scheme in particular. In terms of traditional print marketing, we will distribute A6 double-sided postcards advertising the box scheme in cafes in Brighton, Lewes and Forest Row. We also hope to distribute them via local veg box schemes. During the summer of 2016 we plan to promote the box scheme at a small number of local festivals (e.g. Elderflower Fields, Into The Wild) where we will run herb walks for festival-goers in conjunction with the Beloved's Arms Cafe. We will advertise on our own display board at Wowo campsite near Sheffield Park which attracts thousands of visitors and holidaymakers every year, including many wealthy families from London.

Appendix 3 - Hathor Farm

Project summary

Hathor Farm will keep heritage breed pigs, chickens and sheep and sell produce directly to the customer. The produce will consist of meat, eggs and potentially wool/fleeces. Both the land and the animals will be cared for according to biodynamic principles. We will also run occasional workshops throughout the year which focus on biodynamic farming methods and animal care.

Mission statement

Animals have always been part of our lives, certainly not just as a source of food, but also as a way to manage the land, and interacting with animals is something that reconnects us with our humanity. At Hathor Farm they will graze the land (sheep), turn over soil and clear weeds (pigs), and clean up what is left on the land (chickens). All of them provide natural fertilizer in the form of their manure, which can be composted. They will be free range, moved around the land flexibly, fed organically and kept in accordance with biodynamic principles. Hathor Farm will keep heritage breeds, not only to preserve breeding stock, or because they are better capable to function in diverse environments, but also because they are still closer to the archetypal animal. Hathor Farm will strive to ensure not only that we honour our relationships with animals and with the land at Sacred Earth but we are also ethical and transparent to the wider community. For this reason Hathor Farm will be an open farm environment which honours learning and personal and community growth.

Land requirements

Hathor Farm requires up to 12 acres to keep the animals on a small scale but they can be moved anywhere on the land for clearing or grazing. The fields which have been initially allocated to the project have not been in use for a number of years. They will be cleared by the pigs, resown with a grass/clover/herb lay and then grazed or cut.

Land rental agreement with Sacred Earth

- Year One, Two and Three - £600
- Year Four - £750
- Year Five onwards - £1,000

Market research and marketing

There is a thriving market for organic produce in East Sussex, particularly in the Brighton, Lewes and Forest Row areas. Tablehurst Farm in Forest Row raise organic and biodynamic livestock, the meat from which they're able to sell at a premium price in their farm shops at Tablehurst and Plawhatch farms. Once our Horam site is given Demeter biodynamic certification (Year Three) then we will have access to those markets, potentially selling directly via Tablehurst and Plawhatch Farms, with whom we have a good relationship.

More locally there are popular farmers markets in Heathfield and Lewes, where we predict our products will do well, given their providence (Sacred Earth has good support in Lewes in particular) and the fact that Hathor Farm focuses primarily on rare breeds. From a marketing perspective these are our unique selling points, locality, "novelty" and sustainability. We will also sell directly to retail customers we have an existing relationship with. We already have around half a dozen confirmed customers of this type, with another half dozen possibles. We intend to set up an honesty box selling eggs by the entrance to the Horam site on the Cuckoo Trail, which sees tens of thousands of visitors every year. We will take advantage of this to advertise our meat products.

In terms of online marketing, we intend to maintain an active presence on Facebook, both through our own Hathor Farm page and the Sacred Earth Facebook page and we will take advantage of the major promotion and marketing push which Sacred Earth as a whole will be making in 2016 with respect to our transition from a CIC to a Community Benefit Society.

Finally, we are also considering launching an “Adopt a Pig” scheme in which customers' sponsor a pig for its lifetime and then receive the produce. This kind of scheme has been successful in the Netherlands and there are also examples of similar schemes in the UK.