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Case Study

Green Future Building, Heckmondwike¹

The award-winning (National champion) Green Future Building Ltd, now based in a former woollen mill in Elland, is a business built on supporting young people.

Director John Beaumont is committed to giving opportunities to those who may otherwise struggle to find work and learn skills. For him, and his business, 'apprenticeships' are not an added extra; they are the core of what his business does.



The company 'GFB' is a not-for-profit social enterprise, founded in 2012, to help young people access education and employment in the sustainable construction industry. They carry out a range of cutting-edge work, from building small products like conservation nestboxes and planters to completing large projects such as an extension to a school.

John says: *"Even though we are a social enterprise, we are still a business, in fact because the majority of our workforce is in training or on placements it is even more important that the apprentices contribute to the overall productivity. Their commitment ensures the continued future of the organisation and their jobs."*

Green Future Building is passionate about the benefits trainees bring to their business but say their ethos is that they have to fit into the business rather than the business fitting in with them.

"An apprenticeship with us isn't an easy option. We would be doing a disservice if the experience they were getting was different from in any other commercial organisation. They start early in the morning and finish at the same time as their colleagues and have to work to the same rules."

Many of the apprentices who have trained with Green Future Building, and their learning partners including Kirklees College, have gone on to work full-time within the company. Some have also completed courses qualifying them to mentor others, ensuring the skills learnt within the business stay within the business.

¹ *This Case Study was updated in 2017 from an original document written in February 2014 by Kirklees Council apprenticeship hub, one of eight set up in the Leeds City Region with the aim of helping business thrive and grow through apprenticeships. For further insight into Green Future Building including Awards and Case Studies see www.greenfuturebuilding.org.uk/about*

“Working with young people who have not had the best start in life is challenging but also rewarding, - one of our apprentices has shown a natural talent for joinery, which puts him way ahead of his peers. He is producing high quality work that is already adding value to the business – if we hadn’t given him this opportunity then we would all be missing out.”

The company has won awards for its range of products at the Harrogate Flower Show, created an eco pavilion for Prince Charles’ Garden Party and supplied owl boxes to farms in East Yorkshire.

John believes their ethical approach not only helps those who work with them as apprentices but also the company itself:

“Our approach to supporting young people is often seen as a unique selling point. When we sell our products, companies see the excellent quality they are getting but also recognise an additional value in buying from us because of our environmental ethos and support of young people.”

A Dewsbury Moor resident whose son was on a work placement in joinery with a GFB project says:

“He had completed an initial trial following release from a short prison sentence and hoped to secure an apprenticeship. The project transformed his outlook and behaviour.” **A Team Vicar said:**
“The area is one of high social deprivation, with problems including worklessness and lack of facilities for children. Low aspirations compound difficulties in accessing training and employment. Green Future Building projects are addressing the issues (through) opportunities for training and raising aspirations, giving skills and personal satisfaction, while growing personal responsibility.”

GFB grew organically out of a community project backed by Marshalls plc and (as ‘ABLE2BUILD’) won its first funding in 2008 from Northern Gas Networks - to pilot an apprenticeship scheme.

 <p>2008 Wakefield</p>	<p>2003 GFB began as a local community "Green Business Network" project</p>	 <p>2015 Elland Bridge</p>
 <p>Wakefield</p>	 <p>GFB Green Future Building</p>	<p>European Social Fund Sustainable Development Mainstreaming Leader Award (Specialist Project)</p> <p>2013 National Champion (Joint Winner) Green Future Building Ltd West Yorkshire Probation Trust</p>
 <p>2012</p>	 <p>Heckmondwike</p>	