



All about investing in Sacred Earth

Sacred Earth Communities Ltd is looking for investors to help support our agricultural, conservation and education projects. We hope this document will answer all your questions but if there's anything you're unsure about please email phil@sacredearthland.co.uk

What is Sacred Earth?

We are based on the 40-acre site of derelict brickworks at Horam, East Sussex. In 2011 a local philanthropist called Roger Ross purchased the land. He wanted it to be used for community and environmental purposes and has entrusted it to the Sacred Earth management team – of which you could soon be a part.

Since taking over management of the site we've cleared away piles of rubbish and industrial waste, achieved significant environmental regeneration - a recent ecological survey showed it's got better biodiversity than the surrounding countryside - and reinstated parts of it for agricultural use. The site includes a nature reserve wetland area, woodland, pasture and a well stocked fishing lake.

We are now responsible for acting as environmental caretakers and developing the site as a place where we can further our educational, agricultural, ecological and therapeutic aims. So as well as sustainably managing the land, we run experiential learning and mentoring courses and we have an organic farm on the site.

Some of the things you'll be investing in:

- Organic and biodynamic farming. With the help of Just Growth funding, we supported an organic pig and sheep farmer to get his business off the ground. He has now become one of our long-term tenants. We hope to offer a second

tenancy to a young poultry farmer later this year. We see this support for small, ethical farmers as a vital part of our role – particularly given the threats currently facing British agriculture.

- Our experiential learning courses. These are based around the benefits of a stronger connection with nature and sometimes use teachings from indigenous cultures.
- A range of educational and mentoring courses, many of which are aimed at young people.
- An active conservation programme. As well as managing our woodlands in a sustainable way, we have two lakes and an old clay pit that we plan to improve - both in terms of biodiversity and access for the public.
- Our new range of biochar. This is a type of 'super charcoal' that has the potential to reverse soil depletion and act as a carbon sink – supporting sustainable growing and fighting climate change at the same time.
- As we grow we also hope to support a range of small, land-based businesses with community aims.

Why become a member?

Please read this blog from Phil Greenwood, Sacred Earth founder, about why your contribution is so important - <https://sacredearthland.co.uk/why-sacred-earth-why-support-us-a-message-from-sacred-earth-founder-phil-greenwood/>

The modern world is creating physical and mental ill health and degrading the planet. Our culture has become a fractured system, where people are disconnected from each other and from the really basic elements of life - even the food that they eat. We believe that Sacred Earth has an important role to play in combatting this.

Our experience shows us that building a closer connection with nature can have incredible mental and physical health benefits. We aim to use our range of courses and events to create a place where people can connect to the essentials of life, improve their wellbeing and build a greater sense of community.

We also want to create a haven for wildlife. A massive local house-building programme has started, which will destroy many local ecosystems. It will also bring in thousands of new people – potential new members of our community. We are in the perfect position to create a haven for both animals and people.

As a shareholder you'll become a member, and therefore a co-owner of Sacred Earth - even if you only buy one £50 share. You'll have a direct say in how we build the organisation and what we can achieve.

You'll also have the opportunity to join the management committee if you're interested in getting more involved. Contact phil@sacredearthland.co.uk for more information about this.

What is a Community Benefit Society?

A Community Benefit Society (CBS) is an organisation that conducts business for the benefit of its community. Profits are not distributed among members, or external shareholders, but returned to the community. For example, a nursery school might use this form to let staff take part in decision-making. Sacred Earth is now a registered CBS.

Some key characteristics of a CBS:

- They are set up with social objectives to conduct a business or trade.
- They are run and managed by their members.
- They must submit annual accounts.
- They can raise funds by issuing shares to the public.
- They can be established as charities, providing they have exclusively charitable objects that are for the public benefit.

As a CBS our shares are issued by the Community Shares Unit, so they meet national standards of good practice.

What are community shares?

Community shares are a unique form of share capital, also called 'withdrawable shares', which can only be issued by co-operatives or CBSs registered with the Financial Services Authority. They can only be withdrawn from investment subject to the terms and conditions of the society concerned. This makes them different to 'transferable shares'; issued by companies that can be bought and sold on the stock market.

Why should I invest? What do I get?

There are a number of individual benefits to becoming a shareholder. Every investor will be a member and co-owner of Sacred Earth and will get a stake in key decision-making – e.g. deciding who is on the management committee and on resolutions at our AGM. In effect, you will have real say in what the organisation is able to achieve.

Under the law governing CBSs, regardless of how much you invest, everyone has one vote. We believe this fits our ethos perfectly, because all investors will be equal in their desire for our community to prosper, regardless of how much each can afford to invest.

A decision about whether to allow shareholders to withdraw their capital will be made after five years. This will depend on the financial health of the organisation at that time. The management committee will also decide whether to add interest to the withdrawal amount, for the same reason.

Should they be possible, withdrawals will be allowed on a first-come-first-served basis. Members will be required to give three months' notice of their request to withdraw capital. We will not release more than 10% of the total share capital per annum.

Business performance projections give the current management committee confidence that they will be able to allow withdrawals after five years of trading as a CBS. They also believe that this time frame provides an excellent opportunity to significantly lower the costs of their borrowing as a society, to achieve greater social benefit for the local community.

How much does a share cost? Can I buy more than one?

The minimum price is £50 (one share), because this is an investment proposal in a community business - not a donation to a good cause. There's also a cost involved in processing each investment every year, so we can't set the bar too low otherwise it'll end up costing us more than we receive.

CBSs are set up to prevent share capital from being withdrawn at an unsustainable rate. In practical terms this means we will require 180 days notice in order to release your share(s). There will also be a set limit to the amount of share capital we release over a 12-month period.

It's important to note that you may not be able to withdraw your shares if we do not have sufficient funds available at the time you wish to withdraw them. We are currently envisaging that the business side of the organisation will be profitable within five years, after which time withdrawal of share capital will be much more sustainable.

How is Sacred Earth benefiting the community?

Sacred Earth is already benefiting the community in a variety of ways (see below). As a result of the money we raise through shares, we will be able to do much more.

- One of the single most significant ways in which Sacred Earth is benefiting the local community of Horam is through the regeneration of the abandoned Old Horam Brickworks over the last few years. With help from a Veolia Trust grant we're gradually improving biodiversity and making the site more accessible.
- Our Earth Steward Apprenticeship is a year-long course for young people aged between 13-17 that enables them to develop real connections with nature, become more deeply engaged with others and develop a sense of belonging.
- Our weekly programme for Warden Park Primary School is for 9-10 year-olds and offers a range of forest school activities, with a focus on core skills development, better awareness and a connection with nature.

- Our monthly mentoring programme (run in partnership with Cultivating Curiosity) is for children aged between 3-13 years. Over sixty families are currently involved. It includes bushcraft, woodland crafts and wild play, and also benefits parents, offering them an opportunity to become part of a supportive community.
- Other events

We regularly host events that give local people the chance to become part of our wider community. These have included planting an orchard, natural bee keeping, rubbish/waste clearing and Equinox celebrations. We've also run a team-building session for the Environment Agency and we host regular volunteer days throughout the year.

Who owns the land? What happens if they decide to sell?

Local philanthropist Roger Ross currently owns our 40-acre site. Sacred Earth founder Phil Greenwood met Roger while he was studying Biodynamic farming at Emerson College in 2008. They struck up a close and supportive friendship. When, a few years later, Phil took Roger to visit the Old Horam Brickworks which had recently gone up for sale, Roger was so inspired by Phil's vision for the regeneration of 40 acre site for community use that he agreed to purchase it.

It is extremely unlikely the land will be sold. Roger Ross has been a supporter of the project since it began and we have an excellent relationship with him. In fact, as a part of the transition we're currently undergoing we're working with Roger to put the land into a trust, which will safeguard it for community use indefinitely.