

## FRIENDS BUY WOODLAND

Villagers in Whitwick have successfully raised £185,000 to buy their own woodland.

Friends of Holly Hayes Wood, a community group established by members of the local community, have bought their own wood and meadowland.

Holly Hayes Wood and Coalville Meadows, covering some 64 acres, have been neglected for many years and fallen into neglect. The sites are plagued by acts of anti-social behaviour, motorcycle trespass and fly tipping.

The group, whose aim is to own, safeguard and improve these areas, whilst demonstrating the value of woodland to the local community and proving the concept of community owned woodland, acquired the site from the previous owners Hanson Aggregates on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2008.

The purchase was funded through grants from The National Forest, Forward Leicestershire Aggregates Grants (FLAG – a scheme rung by Leicestershire County Council) and the Coalville Special Expenses Group (a scheme rung by North West Leicestershire District Council).

The project which has been well supported by North West Leicestershire District Council, David Taylor MP, County Councillor Pam Clayfield, District Councillors Derek Howe & Tony Gillard and the local schools, now aims to restore the wood and meadowland to their former glory.

As part of the exercise, the group have incorporated two not for profit making limited companies; the first which will act as a trust, and be the owner of the land to ensure that it is protected and owned by the local community over the long-term, and the second, which will deliver a social enterprise business.

The social enterprise business, Holly Hayes Wood Ltd., will aim to drive a revenue stream for the group which will pay for the ongoing maintenance of the woodland by accepting individuals convicted of anti-social behaviour activities, those on probation service and those pupils excluded from school, with the intention of using them to carry out much of the remedial work needed on the sites, whilst also providing them with an alternative education, formal training and associated qualifications, which it is hoped will eventually lead to employment opportunities for those participating in the scheme in the wider community.

The main focus of the group will now turn to tackling the immediate issues on the site; the fly tipping, motorcycle trespass, protection of the bluebell colony, repair of the footpaths & drainage systems, the removal of a potentially dangerous row of poplar trees and the restoration of the pond area.

The group also has an agreement with Hanson's to purchase the Forest Rock site off Leicester Road; and additional grant applications are underway to secure this additional woodland.

To find out more about The Friends of Holly Hayes Wood, visit:

[www.friendsofhollyhayes.go-plus.net](http://www.friendsofhollyhayes.go-plus.net) or email: [friendsofhollyhayes@uwclub.net](mailto:friendsofhollyhayes@uwclub.net)

Adam A Raine  
Chairman – Friends of Holly Hayes Wood

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**Friends of Holly Hayes Wood**

Incorporating Coalville Meadows, Holly Hayes & Forest Rock Woodlands

