



LIFE BEYOND THE MILITARY –
OUTDOORS

CHARITY OVERVIEW

September 2021

HighGround, London Scottish House, 95 Horseferry Road, London, SW1P 2DX
Charity registered in England and Wales 1151225. Company limited by guarantee: 0823 6843.

VISION

Our vision is to be the leading organisation for the provision of land-based opportunities for Service Leavers, Reservists and Veterans.

We were granted charitable status in March 2013 and now we have entered our 8th year of operation we are looking to build partnerships with companies who share our vision to support ex-military personnel into employment and self-employment in the land-based sector where their skills, experience, and values will be appreciated and used to benefit themselves and their employers.

In particular HighGround will:

- Following the successful transition from Headley Court, provide a Horticultural Therapy service to patients at the new Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre (DMRC) at Stanford Hall.
- Continue to provide Rural Weeks for Service Leavers, Reservists and Veterans to provide access to expert advice about land-based jobs, careers and vocational opportunities. A Rural Week is a 5 day fully residential course delivered at an agricultural college for a maximum of 10 service leavers and veterans, to give them an overview of the many and varied employment and self-employment opportunities in the land-based sector, and how to access them.
- Develop the Rural Experience Weeks at Bicton which we piloted in 2021 with funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Trust. These weeks are focused on improved the mental health and wellbeing of veterans and have been adapted using the Rural Weeks model.
- Continue to provide the Virtual Rural Weeks we developed due to CV-19.
- Begin the rollout of the Rural Weeks programme to Askham Bryan agricultural college near York in 2022.
- Provide ongoing formal and informal support for HighGround beneficiaries (HighGrounders) as they continue their journey through transition into civilian life.
- Collect an evidence base to increase awareness of transition challenges, needs and outcomes which will inform the development of appropriate services.

“Horticultural Therapy has given me the confidence in completing activities whilst standing.

I enjoyed the peaceful environment.”

Stanford Hall patient, amputee.

THE NEED

Approximately 14,000 members of the Armed Forces leave every year. It is well recognised across a wealth of research that employment is a critical component of successful transition to civilian life and more importantly that those [individuals] who choose a job as part of a career path, are more likely to be motivated and feel they are progressing. Forces in Mind Trust, (2013) Understanding the transition process for Service personnel returning to civilian life.

Those who join HM Forces are predominantly outdoor people and the land-based sector offers an ever-increasing variety of opportunities for Service Leavers, Reservists and Veterans to use their unique transferable skills learned in the military to pursue jobs, careers and vocational opportunities in the land-based sector in the UK and beyond.

One of the principal challenges to face Service Leavers and Veterans is to be able to identify their transferable skills and then market themselves effectively to employers. In addition there are those for whom the transition to civilian life is not smooth and additional help, guidance and information is required.

“A thoroughly enjoyable and worthwhile week.”

RAF Mental Health Nurse. Still serving.
Rural Week Spring 2019.

WHAT WE DO

Military life teaches motivation, problem-solving, teamwork, resilience and adaptability in sometimes rough and often unfamiliar environments.

HighGround helps Service Leavers, Reservists and Veterans to work out what military skills and experience they have, how they will map into the land-based sector and how to access the many opportunities it offers for employment and self-employment.

We have pioneered Rural Weeks, 5 fully residential days at an agricultural college for 10 Service Leavers, Reservists and Veterans to learn about what the land-based sector looks like from subject matters experts; how to access them. Rural Weeks are run by our Rural Employment Manager in conjunction with the delivering agricultural college.

Since the Pilot at Plumpton College in 2014, we have delivered 32 Rural Weeks. The Rural Weeks programme at Bicton College is in its 3rd year and plans for roll out to other Landex colleges around the UK are advancing well.

Outcomes following a Rural Week include identifying training courses, arranging work experience or volunteering or in the case of those who are still serving, gaining knowledge, information and contacts to assist with their decision-making during their resettlement and transition back to civilian life.

WHAT IS THE LAND-BASED SECTOR?

This is a generic term which covers outdoor industries including Land Management; Environmental (outdoor) Design, Production and Leisure; and Animal Care with a special focus on food production.

WORKING WITH LAND-BASED EMPLOYERS.

Our Development Board helps us to connect with employers across the UK who want to offer work experience and employment opportunities to ex military personnel, and recognise the skills and experience they bring to the workplace.

Through Careers in Racing, BALI, the Arboriculture Association, Historic Houses and many more, our links and success stories are developing every day.



“ The week gave me space and time to think and relax, focus my mind on the future and decide what exactly I want to do and how to get there.

A wonderful experience, one for which I am extremely thankful.

This is a very diverse area and plenty of opportunities for veterans, with a strong support network of professional like-minded people.”

Lieutenant Royal Navy. Still serving.
Rural Week Summer 2019.

“ BALI is excited to be working with HighGround in promoting opportunities in the landscape industry. The men and women leaving the Military leave with many skills that can easily be transferred to the world of landscaping and are just what BALI employers are looking for.”

Steven Ensell,
Education Officer, British Association of Landscape Industries.

HORTICULTURAL THERAPY

Can be defined as ‘The use of plants by a trained professional as a medium through which certain clinically defined goals can be met.’

(THRIVE conference 1999).

In 2014 HighGround started a 3 year pilot at the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre (DMRC) Headley Court to test Horticultural Therapy as an intervention to be used in the rehabilitation of injured service personnel.

It was proven to be highly effective with referring Occupational Therapists reporting in an independent service evaluation by Zoe Morrison, Professor of Human Resources and Organisational Behaviour at the University of Greenwich that they now consider Horticultural Therapy to be an important part of patient care. As an additional modality for treatment, mindfulness and for non-clinical (outdoor) skills development, Horticultural Therapy has now been fully integrated into the range of rehabilitation options available for DMRC Stanford Hall.

During the 3 year pilot funded by The Soldiers’ Charity, the Westminster Foundation and several other generous donors, our Horticultural Therapist delivered 4,072 sessions of Horticultural Therapy to 1,316 patients and the Surgeon General, the Defence Authority for Healthcare in the Defence Medical Services Department has now recognised Horticultural Therapy “As a valuable component of the holistic package of rehab interventions which DMRC delivers to its patients.”

Following a grant from the Chancellor’s LIBOR fund and support from Help4Heroes, HighGround has successfully transitioned from Headley Court to the new DMRC and the service is now fully operational.

There are three patient groups at DMRC:

- Complex Trauma (amputees)
- Neuro (head injuries)
- Force Generation (joints and spines).

Everyone who attends Horticultural Therapy must be referred by their Occupational Therapist.

Reasons for referral include:

- Improve standing tolerance and endurance
- Increase fine motor skills and cognitive processing
- Improve confidence and self-esteem
- Encourage social interaction
- Promote transferable skills.

DMRC patients commented:

“I could use my injured hand without even knowing. It is a calm environment where not only do you feel relaxed, but good about yourself.”

“It takes your mind off the pain and there are a lot of useful and interesting things to do.”

“Nice to get out of the hospital environment into the fresh air.”

“I have vastly improved physically and emotionally. I’d overlooked my emotional needs to concentrate on the physical. Horticultural Therapy has helped me with functional skills such as bending and picking things up from different heights. You find yourself talking to other patients as a bit of self-therapy too, it’s good to offer others an ear to just listen.”

WHO WE HELP

You can read more about Rural Weeks [here](#) and the difference HighGround is making [here](#).



DANNY

Danny served for 14 years in the Parachute Regiment as Airborne Infantry. He left to be with his young family and had always fancied working for himself. He

now runs Mawson Arboriculture in Lincolnshire and returns to Bicton to speak at Rural Weeks and inspire others to use their military skills as he has done. Truly Life beyond the military – Outdoors!



BECCA

Becca is a Warfare Officer in the Royal Navy. She joined us for a Rural Week in 2019 to explore opportunities in sustainable agriculture.

After long periods at sea, the Rural Week gave Becca the chance to speak to subject matter experts and 'test the reality' of her ambitions.

She now plans a post-graduate degree at the Royal Agricultural University Cirencester.



TIM

Tim joined us for a Rural Week in 2019 has since been accepted by Bristol University to do an MSc in Construction Project Management.

Tim served in the Army in the 1980's and after he left, spent time in the construction industry and ran his own plumbing business.

He read about Rural Weeks in Pathfinder magazine and joined us to find out more about working in the land-based sector as you can see from the picture!

The Rural Week convinced Tim that his future lies in what he knows, Construction.

Tim added "I enjoyed the Rural Week; after volunteering at a CIC local to me reawakened my drive and enthusiasm, the Rural Week gave me time to think about what I really want. Buildforce pointed me towards this course and I'm looking forward to getting my teeth into my studies soon and relishing this new challenge."

We are very proud that Horticultural Therapy has been part of the recovery journey for both these patients.

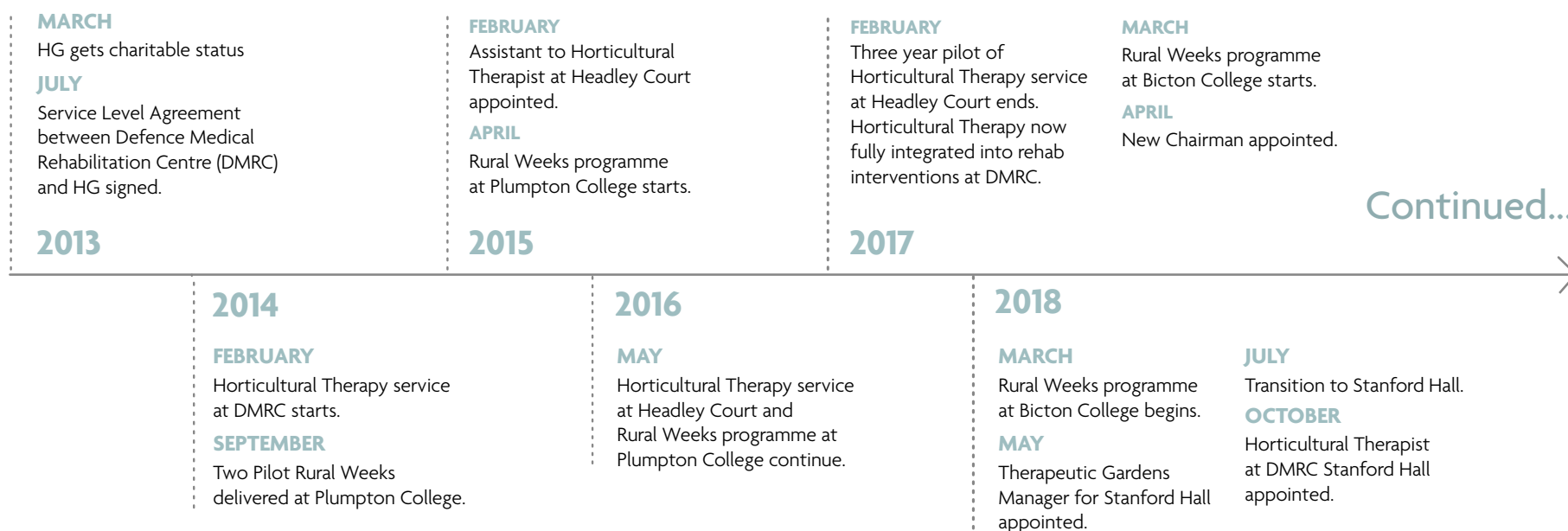


Their rehab goals were vastly different as one was receiving treatment for a training-induced heat injury, and the other had recently had a lower leg amputation but we were able to adapt Horticultural Therapy to benefit both of them.

The physical side of Horticultural Therapy is easy to understand; building raised beds was great for building upper body strength, improving standing tolerance, and adapting to using a prosthetic leg. This type of task also allowed both patients to work on pacing physical activity and ultimately, build up tolerance to exercise.

The mental welfare side isn't visible but often, we work with patients who feel that they have nothing further to offer and are now redundant. Being able to work on a project that focuses the mind as well as the body, with the sense of building something tangible which will benefit future patients is very powerful.

TIMELINE OF OUR ACHIEVEMENTS



TIMELINE OF OUR ACHIEVEMENTS CONTINUED

JANUARY

Horticultural Therapy service at Stanford Hall fully operational.

Development Board's first Secretary.

MARCH

Rural Weeks programme starts at Bickton College.

APRIL

Pilot Rural Weeks at Dartmoor.

2019

MAY

First Farm Shop for patients at DMRC.

JULY

Friends of HighGround stands at North Devon Show and Ipswich Maritime Festival.

SEPTEMBER

Autumn Rural Week programme starts at Bickton College.

JUNE

REW programme at Bickton starts.

SEPTEMBER

Tim Lever joins as Rural Employment Manager.

2021



2020

JANUARY

Rural Business Improvement Manager joins the team.

FEBRUARY

Royal visit to DMRC Stanford Hall.

MARCH

CV-19 pandemic.
Rural Weeks taken online.

JUNE

First Virtual Rural Week.
Horticultural Therapy service at DMRC Stanford Hall adapted for CV-19 rehab patients.

SEPTEMBER

First Rural Week of 2020 at Bickton.

OCTOBER

Rural Weeks programme at Bickton cancelled.
Virtual Rural Weeks programme until Christmas 2020.
Richard Lungmuss appointed Hon Sec to the Trustees.

GOVERNANCE

HighGround has nine Trustees; the Board is chaired by Air Commodore (Ret'd) Ian Elliott and meets quarterly.

Other Trustees are Robert Winterton, Julian Browne, Michael Ward, John Kerner, Sue van Leest. Jon Perkins and Alex Hoppenbrouwers joined the Board in late 2019. Tim Green recently joined the Board to focus on corporate fundraising.

There is also a Development Board drawn from a wide range of experts in the land-based sector which meets regularly to advise HighGround about opportunities and developments in their individual sectors to help HighGround with its mission to deliver Life beyond the military – Outdoors.

Jon Perkins chairs the Development Board and Rhodri Atkins is Hon Secretary.

Anna Baker Cresswell is Executive Director and Director of Operations. She is responsible for fundraising and the day-to-day running of the Charity.

Accountants and auditors: Ryecroft Glenton
Legal advisors: Bates Wells Braithwaite LLP

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“ We have found HighGround to be an amazing charity in so many ways. The advice on land based careers they give military leavers is wide ranging and supportive and this is demonstrated in the quality of the employees who have come to Hi-Line via the HighGround Rural Weeks programme. Having been given the opportunity to look at the different work opportunities available in the land based sector the people

who have chosen arboriculture seem to have researched our industry fully, and are 100% committed to their new careers. Military veterans bring so many transferable skills and quickly become essential members of our teams and assets to our company. HighGround make this career transition accessible to people and understand the challenges that some people may be facing.”

Kirsty McNicol.
Head of HR, Hi-Line Contractors SW Ltd.

FUNDRAISING

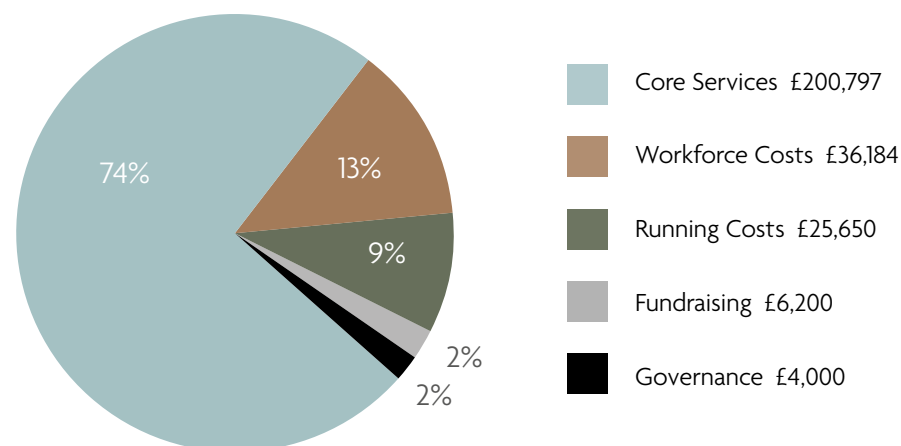
The pandemic has affected HighGround's income and the way we deliver our services, and the Business Plan which the Board adopted at the start of the financial year in April is no longer current.

At the Trustees Meeting in October the Board decided to adopt a rolling monthly plan in the interests of good governance and financial probity for the duration of the pandemic, and the draft version of this will be presented to the Board at the end of November 2020.

For more details please contact Anna;
anna@highground-uk.org
or 07951 495 272



HOW WE WILL SPEND OUR INCOME IN 2020/21



“To build on the success of Step into Health, our inaugural veterans’ employment programme, working in partnership with the NHS, we explored other employment sectors where we could replicate this accomplishment. We knew that the land based sector was a popular post-service employment choice for military service leavers and veterans and from the onset of our research, it became obvious that HighGround was in a class of its own when it came to supporting the military community in this area.

The Royal Foundation and HighGround relationship developed from initially plugging some funding gaps and convening activities to supporting to an Employment Manager position. Anna, Ian and the team work incredibly hard and I envisage that having an Employment Manager in post will lessen that pressure and will be a great boost to the career prospects of those who have completed the Rural Week course.

We have been proud to work with the HighGround team and to be able to support some of the truly remarkable work that they do, and we look forward to seeing this great organisation go from strength to strength in the future.”

Karen Hodgson
Veterans Employment Manager, The Royal Foundation

OUR FUNDERS

We thank each and every one of our brilliant donors, without whom our work would not be possible.





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www.highground-uk.org

Become a Friend of HighGround and receive our free newsletter.

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