



Real Wood STUDIOS

Community Led Local Development

Community Led Local Development (CLLD) is all about putting the power in local hands. Widely used across Scotland and the EU, this funding approach enables communities to lead the way in tackling social, economic and environmental challenges through creative, grassroots projects designed around local needs. CLLD provides accessible grant support helping local organisations turn great ideas into action through collaboration and innovation. Building on the strong legacy of the former LEADER programme, CLLD continues to champion community-driven change. Over the coming months, we'll be celebrating the impact of CLLD by sharing a series of success stories. We're delighted to spotlight projects and organisations that have previously received funding, showcasing the inspiring work happening in communities and the positive difference it continues to make.

Real Wood Studios

Real Wood Studios is a thriving creative and manufacturing hub in the Scottish Borders, dedicated to supporting sustainable woodworking, local enterprise, and skills development. The organisation provides affordable co-working space, shared workshops, specialist equipment, mentoring, and access to locally sourced hardwoods, enabling designer-makers to establish and grow successful businesses in a supportive and collaborative environment.

The organisation is currently home to a range of independent woodworking businesses, including furniture makers and a violin maker, while also operating a specialist sawmill, timber yard, woodshop, and public showroom. Through its unique "tree-to-table" model, Real Wood Studios manages every stage of the timber journey, from sourcing local trees and milling and drying timber to creating high-quality finished products. This approach maximises the value of local resources while maintaining a strong commitment to sustainability through a zero-waste, circular economy ethos.

Alongside supporting local businesses, Real Wood Studios plays an important educational role within the region. The organisation works closely with schools and colleges, hosting visits, workshops, and learning opportunities that demonstrate how local timber is transformed into useful and beautiful products. These activities help inspire future careers in woodworking, furniture making, and the wider timber industry while building essential skills within the local workforce.

By combining enterprise support, sustainable timber production, education, and community engagement, Real Wood Studios contributes significantly to the rural economy of the Scottish Borders. The organisation helps create employment opportunities, promotes the use of local materials, preserves traditional woodworking skills, and supports the transition to a low-carbon, sustainable future. As demand for workshop space, locally crafted products, and sustainably sourced hardwood continues to grow, Real Wood Studios remains a vital asset for makers, learners, businesses, and the wider community.

Real Wood Studios “Centre for Wood” Redevelopment Project

Real Wood Studios has progressed plans to redevelop its site into a dedicated **Centre for Wood**, creating a flagship hub for sustainable timber production, craftsmanship, training, and enterprise in the Scottish Borders. The project aimed to expand the existing facility by 50%, providing additional space for local businesses, educational activities, and visitor engagement.

The redevelopment was designed to secure the long-term future of Real Wood Studios, improve energy efficiency across the site, and support the transition towards Net Zero. A key focus of the project was to increase opportunities for business growth, mentoring, apprenticeships, work experience, and skills development for young people interested in careers within the timber and craft sectors.

An important element of the project was the installation of a new energy-efficient timber kiln, enabling locally sourced hardwoods to be processed more sustainably while reducing emissions and supporting a zero-waste production model.

By investing in improved facilities and infrastructure, the project aimed to safeguard existing jobs, create new employment opportunities, increase visitor numbers, and strengthen the Scottish Borders' reputation as a centre for sustainable craftsmanship, innovation, and rural economic development.



Impact of CLLD Funding - £25,000

Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) funding played a crucial role in enabling Real Wood Studios to modernise its timber processing operations through the purchase and installation of a new energy-efficient kiln. The funding supported the sourcing of specialist equipment and associated infrastructure, allowing the organisation to replace an outdated system that was increasingly limiting productivity, quality, and sustainability.

The project involved extensive research and consultation with industry experts to identify the most suitable kiln for the organisation's needs. Following this process, a specialist kiln kit was sourced from Belgium, alongside a separate insulated container and loading trolley. Key milestones included selecting the appropriate equipment, securing contractors for groundwork and electrical installation, receiving the kiln on site, and successfully bringing it into operation.

The impact of the funding has been significant. The new kiln has improved the quality and consistency of timber drying through integrated humidity monitoring, reducing defects and minimising waste. As a result, more locally sourced timber can be transformed into high-value products rather than being discarded as scrap or used as firewood.

The investment has also delivered substantial environmental benefits. Unlike the previous kiln, the new system can reach the temperatures required to naturally eliminate wood-boring insect infestations, removing the need for chemical treatments and supporting a more sustainable production process. Combined with recently installed solar panels, the kiln has helped Real Wood Studios establish a more energy-efficient, low-carbon, and closed-loop manufacturing model.

In addition, the new equipment has removed a major productivity bottleneck. Faster drying times and improved loading systems have increased capacity, allowing Real Wood Studios to respond more effectively to growing demand from furniture makers, joiners, contractors, and other customers. This has strengthened the organisation's ability to support the local woodworking sector while reducing labour demands and operational delays.

Overall, CLLD funding has enabled Real Wood Studios to take a significant step towards its long-term vision of building a sustainable, innovative timber industry in the Scottish Borders, supporting economic growth, reducing carbon emissions, and maximising the value of locally sourced hardwoods.



Scottish Borders Local Action Group is part of



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