

Johnathan and Bernadette Stamper, High Head Sculpture Valley

At one of the most engaging Forest Futures businesses, High Head Sculpture Valley, it was similarly a simple desire to keep family, home and business together that helped to build a unique, dynamic and forward looking enterprise.

The business is built around the husband and wife team of Bernadette and Jonathan Stamper. Bernadette has a solid background in tourism while Jonathan combines the skills of a farmer and landscape designer with a lifelong passion and undoubted talent for large sculptural works. The Stampers have run their farm near Carlisle for 18 years. With 70 dairy cows and a few hundred sheep, the farm is still a viable part of the business. For a number of years Jonathan ran a landscaping business with his youngest son in an attempt to diversify their income but found himself farming in the evenings, with little time to spend with his family. Bernadette was working at the tourist board, their other son and daughter were reaching the point at which they'd have to consider their future careers. The pressure was on to grow the business into something big enough to keep the family together.

"I'd been doing sculpture since school, selling through various galleries, but I wanted to find a way for us to work together as a family," says Jonathan. "We did think about a farm tourist attraction but that would never have worked. We wanted to create somewhere really different, exhibiting outdoor sculpture."

The result is a dynamic visitor attraction that gets 15,000 visitors a year and that offers artists workspace, evening classes, days out for coach tours, gallery space for local artists and activity space that most recently saw a yoga group taking up residence. In the Stampers' most recent innovation, the family is adding a beauty spa, massage and a hydro pool to the complex to extend the duration of people's stay, generate a greater level of income per visitor, and provide a good part of the business for their daughter to take an interest in. With the major development beginning in 2003, they saw a turnover of £120,000 in year one rising to £150,000 in year two. The business now has 11 employees, five of whom work part-time, and many of whom are from local farming families that need the support, and the income.







