

Village Ways

Village Ways, founded in 2006, is a social enterprise focused on developing responsible tourism in partnership with poorer rural communities, in order to sustain village life and culture, improve livelihoods in remote rural areas and reduce the need for outward migration. Village Ways seeks to create self-reliant local Village Tourism Enterprises (VTEs), each of which is sufficiently profitable to benefit the wider community by creating additional sources of community, household and individual income.

Fundamental to Village Ways are the principles that good businesses, to be sustainable, must be profitable for all partners. Our approach requires that all business units are profitable from the grass roots up, we ensure this by providing a targeted route to market, offering travel experiences with a true essence of people and places, which satisfies the innate longing that we all have for 'authentic' experiences.

Village Ways Partnership was developed by the Founders to ensure that village communities benefit from tourism by gaining income supplementary to their existing and traditional income sources. Village Ways Partnership harnesses international and domestic markets to bring tourists to the VTEs to ensure their commercial viability.

1. Village Ways ensures that the income generated from tourism through the Partnership adds to local income streams but does not replace traditional rural livelihoods.
2. Village Ways seeks to work with local communities through tourism to provide enhanced livelihoods balanced with the imperative to conserve their culture, environment and wildlife.
3. Village Ways works with the tourism industry to create a flow of guests, who are able to interact with communities and learn about each other's lives through authentic experiences.
4. One of the Village Ways Partnership's core values is respect. We expect guests to travel with respect as we respect each of the village partners with whom we work, recognising that we should all celebrate and encourage the maintenance of diversity.

Village Ways offers great experiences for guests passing through the landscape, encountering rural life and staying in rural guesthouses across India, Ethiopia and beyond. The beneficiaries are local communities and their guests. These holidays are offered through our own India-based Village Ways Travel and by partner travel companies from various countries.

In line with our commitment to creating shared value – value for the host community suppliers, value for the company and its shareholders and value for its guests, the consumers, we have developed a code of practice to ensure that these principles are maintained as the company expands. This is enshrined in the following "Founders' Charter".

Founders' Charter

Village Ways works with villages where the following criteria are met:

- There is responsible tourism potential and a market can be identified for it.
- An additional income stream is required in the village communities to enhance livelihoods and reduce poverty.
- Each village community is enthusiastic and able to engage in genuine partnership with Village Ways to achieve mutually agreed objectives and is able to take responsibility at community level in an inclusive and equitable way.
- Village Ways agrees fair fees with the VTE for the provision of agreed services of a defined standard and pays promptly: fees that ensure the commercial viability of all partners.
- The wider community must benefit to some significant degree from the VTE, not just those who are directly engaged in hosting guests.

Village Ways has established Charitable Trusts, which will receive 10% of distributed company profits. The Trusts exist to develop the skills, capacities and infrastructure of rural communities to improve and enhance their livelihood activities. The Trusts work in and beyond the areas where Village Ways is engaged, to:

- Enhance life chances, particularly of women and marginalised groups

- Develop skills amongst young people, encouraging and enabling them to realise their ambitions, to contribute to maintaining sustainable communities
- Develop skills and undertake product development and marketing for handicrafts and food production and processing
- Promote environmental awareness and conservation
- Secure funding for infrastructure and capacity-building for VTEs.

Village Ways has established an Advisory Council to provide a touchstone for the Directors and members of Village Ways so that they may adhere to its founding principles and fulfilment of its social objectives. The Village Ways Advisory Council (the Council) has the responsibility to advise and encourage, and if necessary to warn, the Village Ways Partnership Directors of unintended consequences of their actions or divergence from Village Ways' original principles.

1. The Council has a minimum of seven members and conducts its business led by an independent chair.
2. New members are invited by the Council; this requires a two thirds majority.
3. The Council has quarterly meetings, at least one of which annually is face-to-face. After each meeting minutes will be circulated to the Council and to all members of the Village Ways Partnership Board.
4. The Council has the right to be represented at the Board of the Village Ways Partnership. The director representing the Council shall be the 'Founder Director' nominated by the holders of A Ordinary Shares (the Founders).

The social purposes of Village Ways play an important commercial role in differentiating the company from other tourism enterprises and in securing public relations and market advantage. The Council will oversee the publishing of reports, supported by hard data, on the socio-economic impact of the activities of Village Ways.

The Council is responsible for monitoring the compliance of the Partnership with its founding principles, including that:

- Village Ways adheres to its values and founding principles and in particular that it continues to fulfil the social purposes for which it was established.
- Monitoring reports on the socio-economic impact of the business and other activities of Village Ways are regularly published.
- The Board is advised on ways in which the social purposes can be optimised.
- The VTEs are encouraged to benefit the wider community and that these benefits are monitored and reported annually.
- Negative impacts are identified, monitored and reported in the host villages and neighbouring communities along tourist routes; and that the Village Ways Partnership is encouraged to ensure that any such negative impacts (e.g. social issues like begging) are managed and minimised.
- Each new enterprise is vetted to ascertain that it meets the social objectives of Village Ways.
- The VTEs distribute funds in accordance with the Founders' Principles and that the community as a whole is benefitting.

Harold Goodwin

Professor Harold Goodwin
Chair of the Village Ways Advisory Council

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Director and General Manager
Village Ways Partnership