

# Rural Community Business Awards 2026

## Nomination Guide & FAQs



# About the Awards

**The Rural Community Business Awards are an annual celebration of the incredible achievements of rurally based community-owned businesses** across the UK and the dedicated individuals involved with them.

The awards are open to all Plunkett community business members who meet the eligibility criteria. If you're not a member, please join on our [website](#).

Use this Nomination Guide to choose the award categories that you'd like to enter, and follow our top tips to make your entry stand out!

If you have any questions that aren't answered in the FAQs section, you require information in another format, or need help in order to submit your nomination, please don't hesitate to contact [membership@plunkett.co.uk](mailto:membership@plunkett.co.uk) or call 01993 630022.

And if you're unsure whether to enter, just go for it!

**Deadline for entries: Monday 27 April, Midnight**

**Good luck with your nomination!**

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# Award categories

The 2026 *Rural Community Business Awards* is comprised of nine award categories. Seven of these recognise the achievements of community-owned businesses, while the remaining two celebrate the dedication and outstanding efforts of individuals who are integral to their success.

## Community business award categories

- **Connecting the Community Award** - recognises community businesses that are going the extra mile to create safe and welcoming spaces for everyone.
- **Investing in Local People Award** - celebrates community businesses that are striving to invest in local people through the creation of employment, training and volunteering opportunities.
- **Going Green Award** - celebrates community businesses who are going further to make their business and community 'green' through the introduction of environmentally friendly initiatives.
- **Keeping it Local Award** - recognises how community businesses support their local economy through the provision of and utilising local supply and services.
- **One to Watch Award** - celebrates the community groups that are not yet open and trading but are on the way to creating something incredibly special.
- **Team Spirit Award** - celebrates community groups that embody a spirit of camaraderie and collaboration, and encouragement for one another.
- **Horace Plunkett Award** - recognises longevity and wide-ranging impact of community businesses that have been trading for at least 5 years.

# Award categories continued

## Individual award categories

- **Community Contribution Award** - recognising the outstanding efforts of the individuals who are going above and beyond for their community business. Perhaps through the business, they're going the extra mile for vulnerable residents or they're a constant source of support in keeping the business going? Or maybe they're making a difference by creating initiatives to bring the community together?
- **Young Person Award** - acknowledging the young people aged 15 to 25 who are helping to make a difference in their community-owned business. Is their enthusiasm infectious? Do they always step up in times of need or strive to share their skills in order to enhance the business?

Please refer to the [eligibility criteria](#) before entering.

# Eligibility criteria

## All nominees must be:

- **A community business member of Plunkett UK**

## OR

- **Involved as a volunteer, employee or tenant of a rural community business member of Plunkett UK**

## AND

- **The community business must be situated in a rural location.**

**Community Business Awards** (except 'One to Watch' and 'Horace Plunkett Award - see below) These categories are open to community-owned businesses that are making a difference in one of Plunkett's priority impact areas. In addition, the business must be:

- Open and trading

## One to Watch Award

This award is open to community groups who are on their journey towards being an open and trading community-owned business. To qualify, groups must be:

- Working towards being an open and trading business

## Horace Plunkett Award

This award is a celebration of longevity. Community businesses entering this category must have been trading for at least five years and demonstrate achievements in all of Plunkett's priority impact areas.

Businesses must be:

- Open and trading for a minimum of five years on 27 April 2026

## Community Contribution Award

Individuals must be involved in a community business member of Plunkett UK.

## Young Person Award

Individuals being put forward for the Young Person Award must be:

- Aged between 15 and 25 years old on 27 April 2026

# Top tips for success

To support your entry into this year's *Rural Community Business Awards*, we've put together some top tips that will help make your nomination stand out in front of our panel of judges.

## ▶▶▶▶ **INCLUDE VISUALS**

*Photos and videos are a great way of bringing your story to life, so remember to include as many visuals as you can with your nomination.*

## ▶▶▶▶ **EVIDENCE**

*Include some case study examples that evidence your project or services. Personal stories and testimonials are always a strong way to demonstrate evidence. Quantify your achievements where possible.*

## ▶▶▶▶ **IMPACT**

*Make sure you showcase the impact of your efforts - what difference have those efforts had on the community?*

## ▶▶▶▶ **ENTHUSIASM**

*We know your community is committed and enthusiastic - get this passion across in your nomination! Write as if we don't know you.*

## ▶▶▶▶ **CLEAR AND CONCISE**

*Make your points clearly and concisely so that there's no confusion as to the amazing work you're doing. Use bullet lists. Avoid jargon.*

## ▶▶▶▶ **REVIEW**

*Before you click submit, go back and check you've included all the information you can to best tell your story.*

**If you'd like to talk through your nomination, please contact 01993 630022 or email [membership@plunkett.co.uk](mailto:membership@plunkett.co.uk)**



# FAQs

## **We're not a member of Plunkett. Can we take part?**

Nominated organisations must be community business members of Plunkett UK and individuals must be involved with a member business.

**Special offer** - join Plunkett by Direct Debit before 20 April and get your first month free! Please [apply online](#) by 20 April to be eligible for the Awards. Full details on our [website](#).

## **Can we enter if we've been a previous winner of a Rural Community Business Award?**

Yes!

## **Can I enter more than one category?**

Yes, please enter as many categories as you wish.

## **Can more than one entry be submitted for a nominee?**

Yes, although we do encourage you to consider coordinating your nominations to tell your story in even more detail. Entries received for the same nominee will be considered together.

## **Is there a prize for each of the winners?**

Finalists will receive a certificate and winners will receive a plaque. These will be presented at the award ceremony on Thursday 2 July. All finalists will feature in a major PR campaign.

## **Do I have to pay to enter?**

No, entry into the Rural Community Business Awards is free of charge.

## **How do I make my nomination?**

You can submit your nomination on the Plunkett website at <https://plunkett.co.uk/rural-community-business-awards/>

## **When do entries close?**

Please submit your nominations by **midnight on Monday 27 April**.



# FAQs continued

## How will winners and finalists be selected?

A panel of judges, made up of representatives from award sponsors, will come together in May to review the nominations and choose the winners and finalists.

For the **Community Business awards**, the judges will identify one winner and two finalists for each category. Entries into the Community Business Award categories will be judged on their ability to demonstrate:

- **Impact** – what direct impact has the actions or activities of the community business had on the local community and wider society?
- **Inclusivity** – how inclusive has the work been? Is the project or service accessible to everyone?

Our panel of judges will also select three finalists from the nominations received in the **Individual award categories**. The judges will base their decision on the individual efforts shown in the nomination. In particular, they'll consider what the individuals have done and for how long they've been doing it, as well as looking at the overall impact those efforts have made to the community business and the local community. The three finalists from these two award categories will go to a public vote to decide the overall winner.

## When will the shortlisted finalists be announced?

The finalists from all nine award categories will be announced on the Plunkett website on **Monday 1 June 2026 at 10 am**.

# FAQs continued

## **When will public voting open and close for the Individual award categories (Community Contribution Award and Young Person Award)?**

The public voting round for these two award categories will open at **10am on Monday 1 June** and will close at midnight on **Sunday 14 June 2026**.

## **When will we find out if our nomination has been successful?**

Following the judging session in May, we'll contact each nominee by email **by Friday 22 May** to let them know the outcome of their entry.

## **When will the Rural Community Business Awards take place?**

They'll be taking place on **Thursday 2 July** at The Royal Society of Chemistry in London. The Awards Ceremony will be from **5pm-6.15pm**, and the event will be from **3pm-7pm**, with opportunities for structured networking sessions preceding the ceremony, and celebratory drinks afterwards. The event is funded by our generous sponsors. More details will follow nearer the time.

## **Who will be invited to attend the award ceremony?**

All winners and finalists will be invited to attend the award ceremony on Thursday 2 July. Community business finalists will be invited to bring two representatives and each individual finalist is welcome to bring one guest along with them. Finalists will join Plunkett staff, supporters, sponsors and partners for the ceremony.

## **What is expected of the finalists in order to be a part of the Rural Community Business Awards?**

We would love all our finalists to join us at the award ceremony in London, so please do keep **Thursday 2 July** free just in case!

Each finalist is expected to create a short video that will be shown during the ceremony, alongside other category finalists.

We also ask that finalists engage their members, customers and communities in the campaign, sharing content across their website, social media and newsletters.

# Dates for your diary

| Action                                   | Date                      |
|--|---------------------------|
| Nomination round opens                   | Thursday 12 March         |
| Nomination round closes                  | Monday 27 April, 11.59 pm |
| Finalists notified                       | by Friday 22 May          |
| Finalists announced                      | Monday 1 June, 10 am      |
| Voting round opens                       | Monday 1 June, 10 am      |
| Voting round closes                      | Sunday 14 June, 11.59 pm  |
| Rural Community Business Awards ceremony | Thursday 2 July           |

## Have a question that is not answered here?

Please contact [membership@plunkett.co.uk](mailto:membership@plunkett.co.uk) or call 01993 630022 for more information about the 2025 Rural Community Business Awards.



*[Click here to](#)*  
**[nominate your community business](#)**  
**[and outstanding individuals](#)**



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