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Rural Community-Owned Business Backed By The National Lottery Community Fund

Rural communities, across England, seeking to safeguard essential local services will benefit from new funding awarded to the Plunkett Foundation by The National Lottery Community Fund, the largest funder of community activity in the UK.

Plunkett Foundation, a charity which supports people in rural areas to set up and run resilient, thriving and inclusive community-owned businesses, will receive £492k from The National Lottery Community Fund over three years to provide essential and expert community business support and advice to community groups.

The funding not only recognises the increased need for support now owing to the unprecedented challenges facing rural communities, including those struggling to recover from the impacts of the pandemic and now the challenges brought about by the cost of living and energy price crisis. It will also support Plunkett to re-launch a new-look support service which focuses on creating inclusive, innovative and impactful spaces in rural areas in the future.

With Plunkett's support communities are taking ownership of the services and places that really make a difference to them. Through working together they can safeguard a local shop, pub or community hub that provides access to essential goods, provides jobs and training opportunities, helps the environment and improves the wellbeing of all, especially the vulnerable.

James Alcock, Chief Executive of the Plunkett Foundation, said: *"The support from The National Lottery Community Fund comes at a critical time for rural communities – with many on the brink of losing a much-loved and valued service. This support recognises the long-term value of the help we offer to the 619 existing community-owned businesses in England, but it will also enable us to support over 200 new communities each year that contact us for our advice and expertise."*

Plunkett's support service helps community groups to obtain professional advice from sector experts, at the time when they need help. Community businesses supported by Plunkett have a phenomenal 96% long-term success rate, which is a testament to their

dedicated volunteers and staff and the expertise they can gain from Plunkett's specialist advisers.

James Alcock continues: *"Community-owned businesses are on the frontline supporting local residents. Their activities ensure that the most vulnerable people are able to access the services that they need, when they need them. Thanks to National Lottery players, we can continue our work to help inclusive, innovative and impactful community businesses and to see the network grow in future."*

Plunkett Foundation launched a new 5 year strategy this year, aiming to grow the number of rural community-owned businesses by 2026. These businesses not only protect and enhance local services; they create employment and training opportunities, provide social meeting places, host banking facilities and make a positive contribution to the climate through environmentally friendly activities. Through growing the network Plunkett believe that community-owned businesses will help more people to live and work in rural areas and create greater opportunities for all.

Emma Corrigan, England Director, The National Lottery Community Fund, said: *"We are delighted to be supporting the Plunkett Foundation to enable people in rural areas to set up and run resilient and inclusive community-owned businesses. It's fantastic to see local people taking on this opportunity to form businesses that protect and enhance important places, such as shops and pubs through to woodlands, farms and fisheries."*

"Thanks to National Lottery players, over £30 million is raised for good causes across the UK every week, and we are proud this money will help rural towns and villages to thrive, boosting employment, training and volunteering opportunities, as well as addressing isolation and loneliness."

If you are interested to know more about community-ownership, or need advice and support for a project in your community please get in touch with the Plunkett Foundation www.plunkett.co.uk or call 01993 630022.

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For media information & images contact Chris Cowcher, Head of Communications & Policy, Plunkett Foundation via email: communications@plunkett.co.uk or 07507 602724.

Editor Notes:

Who are the Plunkett Foundation?

Plunkett Foundation is a UK-wide charity with a vision for resilient, thriving and inclusive rural communities. To achieve this, we support people in rural areas to set up and run a wide range of businesses that are genuinely owned by local communities, whereby members have equal and democratic control. Today, we represent over 800 'community businesses' throughout the UK, from shops and pubs through to woodlands, farms and fisheries.

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What is a community-owned business?

Any type of business that trades for community benefit and which is democratically owned and controlled by the local community.

Plunkett's 2026 strategy:

Plunkett's vision is for resilient, thriving and inclusive rural communities throughout the UK. To achieve this, we support people in rural areas to set up and run a wide range of businesses which are genuinely owned by local communities, whereby members have equal and democratic control.

Through our support for community businesses, we have a specific mission to create innovative, impactful and inclusive spaces. We achieve this by helping community businesses to:

1. Provide a wider range of services and amenities that communities value and need
2. Stimulate the local economy through localised supply chains
3. Boost opportunities for employment, training and volunteering
4. Benefit people who are most disadvantaged and excluded in today's society
5. Offset climate change through delivery of environmentally sustainable initiatives
6. Harness digital technologies to enhance business performance
7. Promote equality, diversity and inclusion by creating safe and welcoming spaces for all

Download our 5 year strategy here: <https://plunkett.co.uk/strategy-and-annual-accounts/>

About The National Lottery Community Fund:

We are the largest funder of community activity in the UK – we support people and communities to prosper and thrive.

We're proud to award money raised by National Lottery players to communities across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and to work closely with Government to distribute vital grants and funding from key Government programmes and initiatives.

Our funding has a positive impact and makes a difference to people's lives. We support projects focused on things that matter, including economic prosperity, employment, young people, mental health, loneliness and helping the UK reach net zero by 2050.

Thanks to the support of National Lottery players, our funding is open to everyone. We're privileged to be able to work with the smallest of local groups right up to UK-wide charities, enabling people and communities to bring their ambitions to life.

National Lottery players raise over £30 million each week for good causes throughout the UK. Since The National Lottery began in 1994, £43 billion has been raised for good causes. National Lottery funding has been used to support over 635,000 projects - 255 projects per postcode area.

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