



PRESS RELEASE

06 July 2009

NEW CAMPAIGN TO HELP RURAL COMMUNITIES TO TAKE CONTROL OF THE ISSUES AFFECTING THEM IS LAUNCHED

An innovative new campaign that helps rural communities to take control of the issues affecting them is being launched at the Royal Show today (Tuesday 06 July) by the Plunkett Foundation.

Communities Taking Control is the Plunkett Foundation's major new campaign to promote to rural communities what is possible when rural people believe in what they can achieve together. From communities owning and running essential rural services to taking control of their food and where it comes from, rural communities across the world are increasingly taking control of the issues affecting them. The *Communities Taking Control* campaign will highlight the impact that communities taking ownership has across the UK and give people and communities the tools to take control of the issues affecting them.

Launching the campaign, Peter Couchman, Chief Executive of the Plunkett Foundation said: "Rural communities across the world are increasingly taking control of the issues affecting their everyday lives. From the availability of essential services to providing employment and opportunities for rural people, our Communities Taking Control campaign aims to demonstrate to rural communities across the UK what is possible when rural people believe in what they can achieve together."

The Plunkett Foundation is an organisation which helps rural communities to believe in what they can achieve together. It promotes and supports community-owned enterprises such as co-operatives and social enterprises in rural communities across the UK and internationally and has been doing so for 90 years.

The Village Shop at Feckenham, Worcestershire, is one of over 210 community-owned rural shops in the UK and this number is increasing by around 30 each year. It stocks a wide range of everyday groceries as well as many locally produced foods. There are 60 volunteers who help to run the shop. "It's 19 years since we had a shop," says John Calvert, chairman of the board of the Feckenham Community Shop Association Limited, which governs the store. "We used to have about eight and a post office. Now people are prepared to travel and they like to do all their shopping in one place." Almost three years ago, when the villagers set about designing a parish plan for the 700 inhabitants of Feckenham they discovered that what people wanted most was a shop. They wanted the convenience. They wanted to be able to buy local produce. Perhaps most of all they wanted a place where they could pop out and meet people. The question was how to achieve it. The Village Shop opened in January 2009 and is owned and run by the community in Feckenham.



Stroud Community Agriculture in Gloucestershire is one of 60 Community Supported Agriculture enterprises in the UK. It is a co-operative which is owned by 200 local members which is pursuing a new model for sustainable farming in the England. The risks and rewards of farming are shared between the farmers and consumers to enable. The owner-members hire farmers to run the farm for them but they also do volunteer work on the farm. Members who join the co-op commit themselves to supporting the farm and providing a fair income for the farmers. Farmers can then develop the health and fertility of the farm, its wildlife and the environment. Through this approach, communities can take control of their food and where it comes from. Community Supported Agriculture enterprises across England are being supported by the Plunkett Foundation led Making Local Food Work programme.

Dr. Stuart Burgess Chair of the Commission for Rural Communities and the Government's Rural Advocate said: "As Rural Advocate I have the opportunity to witness the tremendous community spirit and vitality within communities across rural England. I have seen numerous examples of enterprise, initiative and opportunity and have heard about innovative plans to explore how a social enterprise business may offer an alternative way of managing the delivery of local services. The 'Communities Taking Control' campaign is a further opportunity for rural communities to demonstrate the value of community ownership and what can be achieved when people pull together. I wish the campaign well and look forward to hearing about further examples of creative solutions and how people's experience and learning is being shared around the country."

For further information please contact Mike Perry at the Plunkett Foundation on 07779 112130.

High resolution images of a range of rural communities taking control of the issues affecting them are available on request.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

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The Plunkett Foundation (www.plunkett.co.uk) is a national organisation based in Woodstock, Oxfordshire that is dedicated to improving rural livelihoods through co-operative and social enterprise. The Plunkett Foundation works with other organisations that share its aims of helping rural communities respond to challenges to jobs, services and community vitality. Community-owned shops are one example of the growing number of rural social enterprises in the UK. A social enterprise is a business with



primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community. The Plunkett Foundation supports rural communities wanting to set up and run a community-owned shop, providing practical assistance through a network of community retail advisers, its website, various publications and a national office. In 2009 the Plunkett Foundation is celebrating 90 years of helping rural people to believe in what they can achieve together.

The Plunkett Foundation works with the **Office of the Third Sector** (www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third_sector.aspx) to promote the role that social enterprise can play in rural communities in England. As part of the Cabinet Office, the Office of the Third Sector (OTS) leads work across government to support the environment for a thriving third sector (voluntary and community groups, social enterprises, charities, cooperatives and mutuals), enabling the sector to campaign for change, deliver public services, promote social enterprise and strengthen communities. The OTS was created at the centre of government in May 2006 in recognition of the increasingly important role the third sector plays in both society and the economy.

Making Local Food Work (<http://www.makinglocalfoodwork.co.uk/>) is a five-year programme funded by £10 million from the Big Lottery Fund's Changing Spaces Programme. Making Local Food Work aims to secure the long term future of thriving communities that are strongly connected with the land, that understand where their food comes from, and are empowered to respond to their own needs using community-led solutions. A consortium of seven organisations, led by the Plunkett Foundation, is pooling its expertise to develop and promote different types of community food enterprise, giving advice to people all over England looking to re-engage and help others access good, fresh, local produce with clear origins. The partnership includes Campaign to Protect Rural England, Co-operativesUK, Country Markets Ltd, FARMA, Plunkett Foundation, Soil Association, and Sustain.

The Big Lottery Fund's Changing Spaces programme was launched in November 2005 to help communities enjoy and improve their local environments. The programme is funding a range of activities from local food schemes and farmers markets, to education projects teaching people about the environment.

The Big Lottery Fund, the largest of the National Lottery good cause distributors, has been rolling out grants to health, education, environment and charitable causes across the UK since its inception in June 2004. It was established by Parliament on 1 December 2006. Full details of the work of the Big Lottery Fund, its programmes and awards are available on the website: www.biglotteryfund.org.uk

