



Embargoed until Tuesday 00:01 2 May

## CORONATION COMMUNITIES REWARD WINNER ANNOUNCED

### Community in Stourport, Worcestershire crowned as ‘friendliest in the UK’ as part of Coronation Big Lunch celebrations

- Food sharing initiative in Worcestershire wins top prize in Coronation Communities campaign to find and celebrate the UK’s friendliest streets and communities
- Friendliness is UK-wide with finalist rewarded in a Scottish Village, Yorkshire Housing Estate and Allotment Project in Harlow, Essex
- Ten highly commended rewards were added due to high volume of heart-warming stories

With more than 500 heart-warming nominations received, the Eden Project, who are the people behind the Coronation Big Lunch, are proud to announce their Coronation Communities rewards winner, three finalists and ten highly commended groups!

It was **Food Share Wyre Forest** that won judges’ votes for the top prize - a group of neighbours who give up their time to run a food sharing initiative in Stourport, which has now been crowned as the friendliest community in the UK!

As part of the Coronation Big Lunch campaign, organisers aimed to recognise ordinary people making life better for their neighbours. Each group has been identified for the rewards to shine a light on the acts of kindness taking place in our streets, estates and community groups, as the nation prepares to come together for Coronation celebrations 6-8 May.

**Winners awarded the top prize are Food Share Wyre Forest**, a community group run by neighbours to boost social connection and support those struggling with the cost of living. Having created and fitted out a community space that sits at the heart of their community using found and repurposed materials, they are now working to galvanise and boost community spirit. Volunteers take on duties including collecting and preparing food, cleaning the hall and litter picking.

This make-do-and-mend neighbourhood group use what they find and resource, ploughing spare time in to run a food share three days a week, provide breakfasts and roast lunches and put on regular family events. Passionate about reducing waste, the community pride themselves on working resourcefully and repurposing what they can, all with the aim of driving positive social change and responding to the needs of those living nearby, many of whom are struggling to get by.

The community applied to win the Eden Project Coronation Communities reward garden to create a growing space for fruit and vegetables that people locally can cultivate, with the aim of sharing home-grown produce and eating more fresh ingredients, and improving their connections with each other and with nature as they tend the garden together. The group also hope that the garden will provide a place for educational activities for local children, teaching them how to grow plants, learning where food comes from, and how to harvest, prepare and cook it.



**Velda McMillan from Food Share Wyre Forest, winner of Coronation Communities, said:** *“The volunteers at Food Share Wyre Forest at The Walshes Community Centre are thrilled to have won this award. We hope to be able to expand our activities to our wider community from young to old and to introduce outdoor seating and planting areas that will encourage even more participation. It’s such an exciting project for all of our volunteers and we can’t wait to offer new experiences and opportunities to our community as a result.”*

Three other communities have been recognised for their inclusivity, positivity and friendliness, and will receive funding towards their community ideas and a Coronation Big Lunch hamper. They include Plant Pots and Wellies, Harlow Essex, Carnbo Village in Scotland and New Keith Thompson Centre Committee (TNKTCC) in Braithwaite & Guardhouse, the largest estate in Keighley, Yorkshire.

**Finalist - Plant Pots and Wellies (PPW)** is an exciting volunteer run community initiative in Harlow, Essex created to support children and adults with additional needs. Teaching about gardening and nature, and growing food from seed to plate, it provides horticultural therapy supporting those with neurological conditions, such as autism and physical challenges. It’s accessible to wheelchair users and partially sighted gardeners, as well as those suffering with mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety. The group is regarded as a place where everyone is welcome, everyone is treated as an equal and people of all ages and abilities thoroughly enjoy attending or volunteering.

**Rowen Saunders volunteers at Plant Pots and Wellies and said:** *“It’s amazing to be a recognised as a Coronation Communities finalist! At Plant Pots and Wellies, new friendships are forged and those more vulnerable members of Harlow are supported. Life skills are taught and confidence is boosted. Plant Pots and Wellies is for everyone and has formed a close knit ‘extended family’ community – where friendship, fun and people grow together. We can’t wait to use our prize to do more of what we do best!”*

**Finalist – Carnbo Village, Scotland.** Community spirit burns bright in Carnbo - a friendly, inclusive rural village in Scotland where neighbours go above and beyond to support each other. Since buying the old village school in 1988 for £1, neighbours have transformed it into the only meeting place where people can socialise. Activities range from evening *Hall Talks*, a free Children’s Christmas party and quizzes to Hogmanay, music nights, *Coffee & Chat* mornings during the colder months and fun summer afternoon BBQs that bring families, friends and neighbours together, all boosting community spirit, supporting mental health and reducing feelings of isolation. Through illness, bereavements, births and enduring the challenges they faced during the pandemic, neighbours have reached out and supported one another by offering lifts, food, practical help, or just a listening ear and empathy.

**Diane Timmins, who lives in Carnbo and applied for the rewards, said:** *“We couldn’t be happier to be honoured as a Coronation Communities finalist. Our friendly and inclusive community goes above and beyond to support people and is brimming with kindness and connection. Despite living in a rural, spread-out area, thanks to our village hall, we regularly come together and build relationships that ensure everyone feels supported by their community. We’re excited to use our prize to help us continue our work building community spirit.”*



**Finalist - TNKTCC in Keighley, Yorkshire.** At the New Keith Thompson Centre Committee (TNKTCC) in Braithwaite & Guardhouse, the largest estate in Keighley, Yorkshire, the community has fighting spirit, but no places to meet. Having lost vital community spaces, neighbours have banded together to turn the tide of disconnection. They have started hiring spaces for activities to bring people together, running bingo sessions, coffee mornings and mother & toddler groups. Determined to create vital opportunities for neighbours to make friendships, socialise, and support one another, they are battling against the odds to provide opportunities for people to socialise – knowing that creating a sense of connection is vital to the mental health and wellbeing of those in their community. They have an ambitious vision to create a new meeting space open to everyone and are fundraising towards that dream.

**Julie Meares from New Keith Thompson Centre said:** *“Our community has been without a community centre for years and they deserve more. I can see the enthusiasm for a community centre where all residents can participate in regular activities and truly feel part of the community! We’re eager to have a Coronation Big Lunch street party and use these funds and this occasion as a launch for our ambitions for our new community centre, demonstrating to local people how far we’ve come and what more we have to achieve.”*

Other highly commended communities stretch across the country, from a charity supporting vulnerable, bereaved and isolated people in Birmingham, to a Cornwall village community that rallied together after losing much-loved residents during the pandemic, a multicultural community in Harrow that shares food, picks litter and supports those in need and a park group in Rotherham doing its bit to introduce greenery and encourage accessible play for all.

**Peter Stewart LVO, Chief Purpose Officer at the Eden Project, which is behind the Coronation Big Lunch, said:** *“As we approach a momentous weekend for the whole nation, we’re proud to be honouring the streets, neighbourhoods and community groups that go the extra mile to make life better in their local areas. From groups going all out to green up and clean up their streets, to neighbours supporting each other through the toughest of times and roads coming together for events reducing loneliness and isolation, these outstanding communities are a shining example of what can be achieved when we come together. Whether it’s through organising a Coronation Big Lunch, an offer of a cup of tea or a knock on a door, we hope that these communities will inspire many more people across the country to get to know their neighbours better and see what can grow from that first spark of connection.”*

The Coronation Big Lunch will form a central part of the celebrations for His Majesty The King and Her Majesty The Queen Consort’s Coronation Weekend between 6-8 May. Millions of people at tens of thousands of events of all shapes and sizes are expected to take place across the UK with neighbours invited to join the celebrations in whatever way works for them. By bringing neighbours, communities and the nation together in celebration, the Coronation Big Lunch will help people make new connections and friends where they live, raising community spirits as part of this historic occasion. Her Majesty The Queen Consort has been Patron of The Big Lunch since 2013.



The Big Lunch has been running annually since 2009 and is made possible by The National Lottery. Last summer people across all four nations got together with a Big Lunch, with many positive impacts felt by those taking part. Millions of people said the event helped them to feel less lonely,

92% of organisers reported it had a positive impact on their community. Almost two thirds of people who took part said it encouraged people to get more involved in voluntary work. Big Lunch organisers have raised a whopping £70m for good causes since 2015.

To find out more go to [www.CoronationBigLunch.com](http://www.CoronationBigLunch.com) or follow us on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram @edencommunities

## ENDS

For media enquiries contact: Sarah Boniface [Sboniface@edenproject.com](mailto:Sboniface@edenproject.com) 07904723277 or Josje Praamstra [Jpraamstra@edenproject.com](mailto:Jpraamstra@edenproject.com)

## Editors Notes

### About Coronation Communities – Highly commended communities

As well as the winner and three runners up, ten communities were highly commended. They include:

- **Rotherham** – Friends of Greasbrough Park, a community group rejuvenating outdoor spaces in four economically deprived estates and villages by installing accessible play areas and gym equipment, introducing new greenery and running events for families.
- **Radnor, Harrow** – A thriving multicultural community where people of all ages, cultures come together to support each other through food sharing, plant swaps, support for the vulnerable, litter picking and fundraising for refugee communities.
- **Halton, Cheshire** – A neighbourhood where connections grew during the pandemic, leading to community-led campaigns to bring people together including a wildflower planting weekend, living advent calendar, Easter and Halloween trails, wellbeing days and a ‘cards fighting loneliness’ initiative.
- **Quatt, West Midlands** – Quatt Community Allotment, a rural village community running warm hub craft sessions and offering opportunities to connect that aren’t cost-prohibitive, as well as an allotment project targeting harder to reach groups.
- **Glasgow** – Hayburn Playpark, a bustling community hub with play spaces for people of all ages, entirely run by volunteers and offering events and workshops to bring people together and encourage engagement with nature.
- **Coldstream, Scotland** – Small rural community that despite its size, has over 50 volunteer-run groups and organisations catering to every age group, including a community larder tackling food and reducing food waste.
- **Saltash, Cornwall** – Core Youth Project community hub, a vital project providing a safe space that inspires and engages not only young people, but neighbours of all ages. It runs activities



for over 300 people a week spanning from after school clubs and mother and baby sessions to gardening sessions and carpet bowls groups for older residents.

- **Middleton, East Midlands** – Close-knit community with a wide range of engagement activities, from year-round events to communal gardening, assistance for the elderly, a food bank and weekly coffee, cake and soup get-togethers. As well as caring vulnerable people locally, the community fundraises for a huge range of good causes.
- **Tregony, Cornwall** – Small village that is proud to welcome all, with residents coming together for concerts, bonfires, sports events and more. After losing a third of a local care home's residents during the pandemic, a community support group was established, with local people now also working on environmental and community heritage projects.
- **Birmingham** – St Martin's Social Care Project, a charity supporting lonely, vulnerable and bereaved people in a deprived area of Birmingham by running enrichment activities that build friendships, increase connection, develop skills and boost confidence.

### **About The National Lottery**

The National Lottery is the largest community funder in the UK and proud to award money raised by National Lottery players to communities across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. National Lottery players raise £30 million each week for good causes throughout the UK. Since June 2004, they have made over 200,000 grants and awarded over £9 billion to projects that have benefited millions of people.

### **About PG tips**

PG tips uses only 100% Rainforest Alliance Certified™ tea and was the first tea brand in the UK to carry the Rainforest Alliance Certified™ seal, and it has continued to make positive changes, switching to biodegradable tea bags and removing plastic from the products. PG tips is not only passionate about making tasty cuppas but is also committed to ensuring our tea keeps building communities, improving people's livelihoods and respecting the environment.

### **About Iceland and the Food Warehouse**

Iceland is recognised as the UK's leader in frozen food and operates over 1,000 stores across the country and it prides itself on being a convenient and friendly place to do the family's weekly shop. In 2018 it committed to becoming the first major retailer, globally, to eliminate plastic packaging from all of its own label products by the end of 2023, and to remove palm oil as an ingredient from its own label range by the end of 2018.

### **About The Julia and Hans Rausing Trust**

The Julia and Hans Rausing Trust is a charitable fund supporting organisations and initiatives that provide benefits to society across the UK. Since its formation, it has provided over 1,000 grants totalling more than £330 million.