

Plunkett Foundation News

27th January 2012

Landmark event to fuel rural community enterprises

Experts gather to support rural communities

Booking has now opened for the Village SOS national conference, a free landmark event to help rural communities save vital services and reverse the trend of rural decline.

The Village SOS national conference will draw on the widest range of experts from across the rural and social enterprise sectors to give communities the support they need to rejuvenate their villages by setting up community enterprises – from shops and pubs to local food and transport projects.



UK Chair of the Big Lottery Fund, Peter Ainsworth, will be joined on the day by leaders of the sector, including Plunkett Foundation's Chief Executive Peter Couchman, Co-operatives UK's Chair, David Button, Action for Communities in Rural England (ACRE)'s Chief Executive Sylvia Brown and Locality's Chief Executive, Steve Wyler, all of whom are partners on the Big Lottery Fund's Village SOS programme which provides the most comprehensive support ever available to communities setting up community enterprises across the UK.

The UK's community enterprise pioneers will also be present to inspire delegates to start up their own enterprises, like Fordhall Farm, the country's first ever farm to be owned by its community, and Cybermoor, a revolutionary broadband community enterprise that has transformed broadband services for the most remote parish in England. They will be joined by specialists across the spectrum, from business and funding experts to planning and marketing professionals.

Peter Couchman, Chief Executive of Plunkett Foundation, said: "This is a challenging but exciting time for rural communities. Although facing new challenges, they are increasingly turning to themselves to address the issues they face, and this landmark Village SOS event will give communities the tools and inspiration to go about tackling these issues themselves by setting up new enterprises in their communities."

This free-to-attend event is the essential conference for anyone with an interest in rural communities and community enterprise. It will feature specialist workshops on topics like business planning and accessing finance, debates on issues facing rural communities and how they can be overcome, and the chance to have your say on what you need to rejuvenate your village. To find out more and book your free place visit <https://www.villagesos.org.uk/national-conference>.

PLUNKETT ON FACEBOOK AND TWITTER

Plunkett Foundation on Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Plunkett-Foundation/146827248663874?ref=ts>

Plunkett Foundation on Twitter: @PeterCouchman, @Mike_Plunkett, @HarrietPlunkett, @Kat_Plunkett, @MrsM_Plunkett, @James_Plunkett.

Government secures 10 year Post Office deal

Government has secured the future of the Post Office under a 10-year deal giving certainty to postmasters, ministers have announced. The long-term arrangements between the Post Office and the Royal Mail will be reached before the two are separated under the Government's privatisation plans.



Postal Affairs Minister Edward Davey (pictured left) said: "Concerns people had about the Post Office becoming independent from Royal Mail were always misplaced as that separation is part of our cure, but the 10-year deal struck between Royal Mail and the Post Office will give sub-postmasters and others greater confidence.

"Coupled with winning new contracts and the successful pilots of new operating models, the signs are extremely encouraging for the future of the Post Office."

The deal between the two companies gives additional certainty to subpostmasters across the UK and covers the full range of Royal Mail products available at post offices such as first and second class post, parcels, air mail, recorded and special deliveries. The deal adds to other recent progress for the Post Office, with extra Government cash kicking in, new national and local government contracts won, successful piloting of new models to transform many local post offices and improvements in financial services offered. To find out more about this visit <http://nds.coi.gov.uk/content/Detail.aspx?ReleaseID=422949&NewsAreaID=2>.

Rural Broadband Fund deadline fast approaching

There are only a few days left for those wishing to express an interest in the Rural Community Broadband Fund (RCBF) which sees £20m of funding from Defra and Broadband Delivery UK as part of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE). Its aim is to provide grants to communities to establish superfast broadband in hard-to-reach areas.

Expressions of Interest are to be received by 31 January 2012, with those invited to submit a full application being notified in February 2012. For more information about the fund, visit <http://rdpenetwork.defra.gov.uk/funding-sources/rural-community-broadband-fund>.

Free packs for communities to host 'Big Lunch'

The Big Lottery Fund is encouraging people to come together in their communities by holding a 'Big Lunch', and is making available free packs to help the organization. The Big Lunch is an initiative that started in 2009, and last year almost 2 million people took part in order to encourage a sense of community where they live. It is funded by the Big Lottery Fund and supported by MasterCard and Kingsmill – for more information visit <http://www.thebiglunch.com>.

Professor Tim Lang adds name to top community food conference

Professor Tim Lang, the UK's leading expert on Food Policy, will join experts at *Making Local Food Our Future*, a free to attend conference where 500 people are expected to debate and discuss the future of the community food movement.

He joins Peter Couchman, Chief Executive of Plunkett Foundation, Ed Mayo, Secretary General of Co-operatives UK and Peter Wanless, Big Lottery Fund's Chief Executive at what will be a must-attend event for anyone interested in the future of community food.

Peter Couchman, Plunkett Foundation's Chief Executive and Director of Making Local Food Work, said: "There is a challenging but exciting future for local food. This event will bring together a range of leading individuals, organizations and community food enterprises who want to be part of an enterprising future and want to have a role in shaping its direction."



Professor Lang was a founding member of the London Food Commission in the 1980s, which conducted groundbreaking work on issues such as food additives and the effect of food poverty among those on low incomes. Working on issues such as 'food miles' which refer to the distance our food travels before it reaches our plates, his work also made a major contribution to the Food Safety Act of 1990 and the creation of the Food Standards Agency in 2000. In 2007 he was inducted into the Observer Food Monthly's Hall of Fame.

Also speaking at the event is Pamela Warhurst CBE, chair and founding member of Incredible Edible Todmorden, a pioneering local food partnership in West Yorkshire. She is also Chair of the Forestry Commission, regeneration company Pennine Prospects and has also been Deputy Chair of the Countryside Agency. She was awarded CBE in 2005 for services to the environment. Book your free place at <http://makinglocalfoodourfuture.eventbrite.co.uk>.

Co-operatives central to fighting hunger, stresses UN agency

Co-operatives and producer organizations will be increasingly important in efforts to eliminate hunger and reduce poverty, the head of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has said.

"FAO needs strong co-operatives and producer organizations as key partners in the effort to eliminate hunger for some 925 million people, and to respond to the many challenges that face our world today," said Director General Jose Graziano da Silva. He told participants of the 2012 Thematic Social Forum in Brazil that FAO would be stepping up its collaboration with producer organizations and rural, food and agricultural co-operatives that give organizational, economic, and social clout to small farmers, pastoralists and those who rely on fishing and forestry for their livelihoods.

2012 is the UN's International Year of Co-operatives - <http://social.un.org/coopsyear/>.