

Plunkett Foundation Call to Action

This call to action aims to raise awareness within Town and Parish Councils across the UK of the potential for community co-operatives to address problems local communities are facing and the support available from the Plunkett Foundation.

Our goal is to provide Town and Parish Councils with the tools and information they need to either get involved directly, or to pass onto other community groups and individuals in their locality.

The Plunkett Foundation and Rural Community Co-operatives

The Plunkett Foundation is a national charity that helps communities across the UK to set up and run community co-operatives; enterprises that are owned and run democratically by large numbers of people in their community. Community co-operatives help people to tackle a wide range of issues, from social isolation and loneliness to poverty, and come in many different forms including community shops, pubs, cafes, woodlands, food and farming enterprises and anything in between. Since 1919, Plunkett has supported over 500 such enterprises to set up by providing help, advice, and when funding allows, financial support.

Our strategy

Plunkett's 2015-17 strategy aims to build on our achievements to date, and inspire an even larger movement of people who solve their challenges by running community co-operatives. Key ambitions within the strategy include:

- Inspiring more communities than ever before to consider co-operative solutions to the problems they face;
- Applying the co-operative solution to a wider range of business models, for example, transport, housing and health and social care;
- Reaching all parts of the UK, particularly where there is less of a tradition for co-operation;
- Increasing our impact in addressing place based problems such as poverty, isolation and loneliness.

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It is very rare for Town and Parish Councils to be directly involved in the setting up or running of community co-operatives, but in our experience, they have been critical to the early stages of their journey in some way. Very often, it is the Town or Parish Council that has spotted an opportunity to save a valued asset or service, or called a public meeting, or highlighted potential avenues of funding.

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This call to action, sets out the various ways in which Town and Parish Councils can get involved.

7 ways to take action:

1. Consider registering land and buildings in your community as an **Asset of Community Value** (or support another community group to do so).
 - The 2011 Localism Act allows communities and parish councils to nominate buildings or land for listing by the local authority as an Asset of Community Value.
 - In the event a listed asset comes to be sold, a moratorium on the sale (of up to six months) may be invoked, providing local community groups with a better chance to raise finance, develop a business and to make a bid to buy the asset.
 - More information is available in [this helpful tool](#) produced by Locality or visit the Locality website at www.locality.org.uk
2. Explore developing a parish or neighbourhood plan, and incorporate the community ownership solution to problems highlighted by your residents
 - Neighbourhood Planning was introduced in 2012 to enable communities to have more say in the future development, regeneration and conservation of their area. Plans are based on a robust programme of community engagement and consultation of the views, aspirations, wants and needs of local people and can become part of the statutory development plan for the area.
 - By going through the Neighbourhood Planning process, you will certainly identify problems your community is facing, and potentially opportunities for community ownership to be part of that solution.
 - More information is available in [this helpful tool](#) produced by CPRE or visit the CPRE website at www.cpre.org.uk
3. Promote the concept of community ownership and the support available from the Plunkett Foundation via your community newsletter and website
 - The Plunkett Foundation offer free support by phone, via our website and through our national network of advisers.

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- A guide to the support we can offer and how we work is appended [here](#) or can be found at www.plunkett.co.uk/gettingstarted You may wish to signpost a link to this on your website, or refer it to the editor of your parish newsletter.
4. Call a public meeting in the event an asset or service in your community becomes at risk, and help to establish an independent working party to consider the community ownership approach.
 - If a valued service or asset is at risk of being lost to your community, e.g. the last village shop, or a popular community building such as a pub, club or faith based building, you could call a public meeting to seek views on whether there is appetite to save it in community ownership. Plunkett can send guidance for running such a meeting, including presentations, case studies and explanatory guides.
 - This doesn't mean it is the responsibility of the Town/Parish Council to lead the next steps – the purpose of the meeting is to establish whether there is appetite for an independent working party to be established.
 5. Support community groups that are exploring community ownership by joining their committee, or contributing to their feasibility costs
 - Once an independent working party is established to assess the demand and feasibility for a community owned enterprise, it can be helpful for the Town/Parish Council to nominate a councillor to be part of the group. Their local knowledge and understanding of the planning system could be vital to the groups success.
 - Alternatively, or additionally, you might want to issue a small bursary award to the community group to help them with early stage feasibility and planning costs. This might be to fund meeting room space, printing, consultation exercises or professional fees.
 6. Consider purchasing the asset the community is exploring through a Public Works Loan and rent or lease the asset back to the community
 - Town and Parish Councils (subject to eligibility criteria) have access to affordable public loan finance (Public Works Loan) which they could apply for and use to purchase the asset the community has in mind. Once in parish ownership, it could then chose to donate, rent or lease to the community co-operative for them to take on the day to day management.

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- More information on Public Works Loan finance is available [here](#) or visit www.dmo.gov.uk
- 7. Join the Plunkett Foundation for £75 as a contribution towards helping other rural communities access community ownership advice and support.
 - Plunkett receives over 750 new enquiries each year from town and parish councils and other community groups seeking advice on community ownership. This service is currently provided free of charge, but it is only possible through a combination of donations, membership income and some project income.
 - You don't need to be a member to receive advice from Plunkett, but members do benefit from regular news updates, bulletins and invitations to networking events and meetings.
 - You can join Plunkett by visiting www.plunkett.co.uk/become-a-member