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The Blackmore Vale Charity: The Royal Countryside Fund and Waitrose & Partners support North Dorset families through "The Vale Pantry" initiative



The Royal Countryside Fund and Waitrose & Partners are thrilled to spotlight The Blackmore Vale Charity, a social supermarket in Sturminster Newton, as a key beneficiary of their Happiness Grants programme.

The Blackmore Vale Charity, also known as The Vale Pantry, addresses food insecurity by providing affordable, nutritious food to low-income families and individuals, promoting dignity and choice through its innovative membership model. This initiative also extends its support through the "Pantry on Tour" mobile service, ensuring those unable to visit the store can still benefit.

The Royal Countryside Fund (RCF), supported by Waitrose & Partners, proudly continues its commitment to transformative community-centred projects through their Happiness Grants programme. This initiative, launched in 2022, aims to enhance the lives of individuals in rural communities, building upon a partnership that has flourished since the charity's inception in 2010.

The Vale Pantry in Sturminster Newton stands out this year, receiving support to continue their invaluable work in aiding those living and working in rural areas. Waitrose's generous boost of £10,400 is instrumental in enabling this project to expand its reach and impact, reinforcing their commitment to supporting rural communities alongside The Royal Countryside Fund.

Carole Jones, Founder of The Vale Pantry said, "We started during the pandemic when we could see the level of deprivation that many people in our area were experiencing. We're very unique in what we do, supplying fresh produce to our community. Since we opened in 2020, we have helped hundreds of families to get back on their feet again. Funding from The Royal Countryside Fund has enabled us to run an outreach service which in a rural area has been an

absolute God Send for so many families who are without transport, and others who simply are unable to leave their homes due to frailty. Working with around 370 families at any time can be a challenge, but it is with amazing help from trusts such as The Royal Countryside Fund that we are able to do what we do!"

Sarah Dayananda, Partner and Ethnics & Sustainability Manager: Social Impact at Waitrose & Partners said, "Waitrose is extremely proud to support these organisations and the work of The Royal Countryside Fund. We very much look forward to seeing how these exciting, grassroots projects develop and inspire happiness in their communities."

Keith Halstead, Executive Director of The Royal Countryside Fund, added, "Our long-standing partnership with Waitrose & Partners enables the RCF to increase our investment in rural communities, supporting locally-based organisations like The Blackmore Vale Charity in North Dorset who are meeting the day-to-day needs of rural residents. I am very grateful to Waitrose & Partners for their continued support which is making a real difference to rural life."

For more information about the Waitrose Happiness Grant Programme, please visit: www.royalcountrysidefund.org.uk/grants

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For further information or interview requests, please contact Lukas Oberbeck, Senior Communications Officer, loberbeck@countrysidefund.org.uk or 07552 340129.

Notes to editors

About The Royal Countryside Fund

Founded by HM King Charles III in 2010 while he was The Prince of Wales, The Royal Countryside Fund is the only UK-wide charity focused on the unique issues facing farming and rural communities.

The Royal Countryside Fund was established in recognition of the unprecedented pace of social, economic and environmental change contributing to the countryside's steady decline, with rural incomes falling, a loss of local services and amenities, rising costs for farmers, increasing isolation and mental health issues.

To tackle these challenges, The Royal Countryside Fund has invested more than £12 million in more than 500 rural community-led projects and supported over 4,000 farming families through practical programmes addressing business, environmental, and social issues.

In its new chapter, The Royal Countryside Fund continues to improve the lives of people and communities in rural areas, support farming families to take charge of their business and provide support to those in need. Ninety per cent of our land and one-fifth of our people live in rural communities and The Royal Countryside wishes to see a thriving countryside – a living, breathing, working place, that is there for everyone.

To find out more, visit The Royal Countryside Fund's website at
www.royalcountrysidefund.org.uk