

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 THURSDAY 18<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2007**

**HOW TO BECOME A MEMBER OF THE NEW R.I.C.H.  
(That's Really Into Community Harmony!)**

It is a long time since Tom & Barbara Good tried to create a rural good life in suburbia, but the new Living Britain report (launched 17/10/07) by The Future Laboratory in association with Zurich Financial Services, suggests that the desire to create a harmonious, collaborative community is even more relevant today.

At a time when headlines seem to be dominated by the breakdown of social values, a quiet renaissance is taking place across Britain, where communities are redefining themselves with common goals and shared visions.

**What's driving these changes?**

1. An increase in homeworking means people are spending more time in their local community.
2. The British public are becoming increasingly disenchanted with mainstream politics and in contrast feel that they can make a real impact at a local level.
3. There is an increasing concern with doing the right thing and people are looking for ways to give something back.
4. Britain's streets are being regenerated into areas for play, interaction, relaxation, rest and respite.
5. The emphasis on recycling has made people more aware and interested in the actions and policies of local government.
6. Social networking sites have been embraced by the British nation and we now have a wider group of friends and acquaintances than ever before.

**Supporting facts:**

- There are currently 2,348,000 homeworkers in the UK (Enterprise Nation 2007).
- 58% of Britons have volunteered or donated to charity in the last 12 months. (Helping Out: A National Survey of Volunteering And Charitable Giving).
- There are a number of inner city regeneration developments in the UK today including Urban Splash which currently has £1bn invested in regeneration projects.
- 780,000 Britons spend 'more time networking online than socialising in real life.' (uSwitch.com)
- Bicycle travel has increased by 83% in the last seven years (Transport for London).

With so many changes at play in the local community it is not surprising that Britain is witnessing a re-invigoration of community spirit and pride identified by a number of trends including:

### **The Urban Village**

Urban communities want to take the traditional elements of village life and give them a new, urban twist. There has been a proliferation of farmers' markets, village fetes and festivals across Britain's cities. A grass roots backlash against soulless large out of town retail developments is regenerating local high streets, and even encouraging people to 'grow their own', with a huge surge in the popularity of allotments and an urban revival of traditionally country pursuits like bee keeping and chicken rearing.

### **Beverage Bonding**

Small, independent coffee shops serving home-made fare are doing a roaring trade with customers using them as a base to meet people from their local community. Even students are bonding over tea and cake. Examples include: Team Tea at Nottingham University who are 'committed to going to tea shops' and Tea Cake Tuesday at Manchester University.

### **Community Buyouts**

Aping the actions of big business, but with a motivation of community benefit rather than profit, Britain has seen a spate of community buyouts. With Fordhall Farm one of the most high profile buyouts of recent times, other examples include the Old Crown pub in Hesketh Newmarket, the All in One Centre in Tackley and the Isle of Gigha, the latter of which was bought out by its 150 residents to make it environmentally and economically fully sustainable.

### **Comment:**

- Lenka Setkova, UK Carnegie Trust, says developments such as the potential loss of the post office or corner shop have "revived people's interest and the value they place on community. As these places become threatened, it stirred people into action as they realised without them there would be few places to get to know people from the local community."
- Enterprise Nation founder, Emma Jones, "Homeworking boosts local economies and allows people to connect with and be involved with their local community."
- Sarah Gaventa, director of space at CABI says "Tall buildings can no longer just be housing with a car park at the bottom. They have to be designed as an entire community with places to commune socialise, play and exercise for a mixed demographic of people."

## Case Study

Father Brian Ralph launch the St Barnabas Community Fete in one of London's most deprived boroughs, Tower Hamlets. The annual event is 'non-religious, participatory, free and not-for-profit event organised by local people to bring tenants and residents of all ages, faiths and races together.' Over the course of the day-long fete about 2,000 people attend. Father Brian comments, "It's not about numbers, but about giving the community something for a fun day out in a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere."

All of which adds up to a Britain ready to take responsibility for shaping the communities in which they live – whether it be spending cash in their local butchers, instigating a radical scheme like the Totnes pound or the support offered by organisations like the Zurich Community Trust (UK) Ltd. "At Zurich we are very aware of the importance of community, and are prepared to act to support it" said Mark Searles, UK Chief Marketing Officer of Zurich Financial Services. "Via the trust, we are able to support to a wide range of community needs, including recent initiatives tackling drug use and support of the elderly in the community.

### Source:

These findings were taken from the Living Britain Report, created by The Future Laboratory in association with Zurich Financial Services. This report is a snapshot of Britain today, looking at evolving trends and influences. It determines and celebrates how Britain is flourishing in certain sectors, including business, culture, media, community and travel.

-ends-

Media enquiries please contact:

Cassie Newnham on 020 7462762; [cassie.newnham@publicisconsultants.co.uk](mailto:cassie.newnham@publicisconsultants.co.uk)

Olivia Orton on 020 7462 7934; [Olivia.orton@publicisconsultants.co.uk](mailto:Olivia.orton@publicisconsultants.co.uk)

Juliet Cameron on 020 7462 7728; [juliet.cameron@publicisconsultants.co.uk](mailto:juliet.cameron@publicisconsultants.co.uk)

### Notes to Editors

Available for interview:

- Martin Raymond, Director of The Future Laboratory and Editor of the report is available for interviews.
- Dylan Jones, Editor of GQ
- Lowri Turner, presenter and author

Zurich Financial Services Group (Zurich) is an insurance-based financial services provider with a global network of subsidiaries and offices in North America and Europe as well as in Asia Pacific, Latin America and other markets. Founded in 1872, the Group is headquartered in Zurich, Switzerland. It employs approximately 58,000 people serving customers in more than 170 countries.