

EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 THURSDAY 18TH OCTOBER 2007

BRITONS TAKE ACTION OVER LOCAL ISSUES

Britain witnesses a resurgence of interest in local community issues

The British public is 75% more likely to take action over local issues than national issues, according to a survey into what it means to be British today by insurance company Zurich.

Whilst Britons recognise the significance of national elections, they feel that local politics is far more relevant to them. 32% stated that local politics has a direct bearing on their daily lives in contrast to just 18% who felt the same way about national politics.

People are also more motivated to take action that will directly impact their local community with 27% saying being 'community minded' was an important part of being British.

The survey is part of a wider campaign carried out by Zurich, looking at the revival in culture and community, happening across Britain. The survey, together with a new report by independent think tank, The Future Laboratory, called "Living Britain", looks at what it means to be British today, evolving trends and influences and how Britain is flourishing in certain sectors.

Despite, ongoing debates about society, the breakdown of communities and social values, this independent report reveals the growing trend for Britons to be more community focussed. Across the UK, communities are coming together to spearhead change and are re-defining the values of a truly civic existence. Indeed, Britons are bonding over shared common values to create an army of society-changing go-getters.

According to the Living Britain report, communities are pulling together, right across the UK and truly taking ownership of issues that affect them. From shopping in local independent high street stores to the introduction of more radical schemes such as the Totnes Pound and Modbury's ban on plastic bags, Britons are taking responsibility for what matters to them and are making real changes to their lives and the lives of other people in their communities.

In terms of values, according to the survey, Britons (63%) have a very clear understanding of what it means to be British.

- 57% of those surveyed said there should be a national Great Britain day
- 60% of those questioned felt that having a sense of humour is a crucial trait of Britishness, followed by fair play, politeness, being hardworking and showing respect
- Men of action such as have-a-go hero John Smeaton and self-made man Richard Branson are considered to most typify British values today over celebrities, actors and politicians.
- The Union Jack (75%) and the British Pound (61%) are the most enduring symbols of Britain
- Cricketers on a village green (29%) represent the scene that is most identified with Britain

As Mark Searles, UK Chief Marketing Officer of Zurich said, "It is by understanding this culture of change that companies, like us, are able to gain insight into the growing needs of our customers and shape our products and services accordingly."

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Available for additional comment:

- Michael Portillo, broadcaster and former MP
- Ekon Eshow, artistic director, Institute of Contemporary Arts
- Dylan Jones, editor, GQ
- Lowri Turner, broadcaster and columnist

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Notes To Editors

1) Additional findings from the Living Britain report include:

- **Womenomics**

The increase of women in the work place has been a trend for some time, however, such is their influence today they are now challenging old structures and business approaches. Today's consumer is more sophisticated and brand savvy than ever before and businesses need to take this on board. Right brain thinking traits such as creativity, collaboration and empathy play well to the natural strengths of women. It is this approach that is proving to be successful in helping businesses communicate with a more enlightened consumer who wants transparency, authenticity and understanding.

- **The Boffin Economy**

There is a new dialogue in the arena of science and technology where interdisciplinary research and development is driving a 'boffin' economy which the public is eager to engage in.

- **Britain's Cultural Re-booting**

Never before has Britain seen such a wealth of new and exciting cultural developments. Culture is being embraced by a wider age group, ethnic base and social demographic than ever before. Whether its ballet on the buses, reduced ticket prices, less stuffy interpretations of the classics or the thriving online short-films community, Britons are hungry for new and exciting cultural stimulation.

- **Britain is Game On**

Women are the fastest growing group of computer game users. Broadband use has increased dramatically to 85% of internet users, compared to 19% four years ago. With people using the internet for a much wider range of tasks than simply buying books or booking flights, it is not surprising that a much wider demographic is exploring the world of computer games, especially within the realms of casual, immersive worlds like Bebo and Habbo Hotel, mind and intelligence games.

- **Britain Investing in the Home Tourism Industry**

As long security queues at airports continue, we see a rise in people holidaying in Britain and seeking out the hidden gems of the British Isles. Coastal and countryside destinations are undergoing a massive revival which is driving a new generation of 30 somethings to visit the towns and places that were traditionally more familiar to their own parents and grandparents.

- **Volunteerism**

Britons are increasingly concerned with doing the right thing and are actively looking for ways in which they can do so something worthwhile and make a difference. This has led to a significant increase in volunteerism, whether in the workplace as part of a corporate social responsibility policy, using their holiday allowance to put something back or regular weekend voluntary work.

- **W(h)ealthcare Holidays**

Britons are switching the focus of their holidays from indulgence to rejuvenation and health maintenance as part of a strategic plan to stay healthy. The travel industry has embraced this change with a growth of yoga retreats, spas, ashrams, walking and cycling holidays.

1. Zurich commissioned YouGov research with 1972 respondents 8 October 2007
2. For a full copy of the report or the executive summary please visit www.zurich.co.uk/livingbritain
3. 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.