



PHOTO ADVISORY:

Photos are available of an origami money model village made out of English, Northern Irish and Scottish pound notes totalling more than **£20,000**. For more info, see page 3



For immediate release:

News

VILLAGE SOS: BIG AND BBC JOIN FORCES TO INSPIRE UK RURAL REVIVAL

Rural villages in the West Midlands that have a great idea for a new local business venture that will help to regenerate their community are being invited to apply to Village SOS - a new funding scheme being launched this week by the Big Lottery Fund in partnership with BBC One.

Village SOS will award funding to six rural village communities to help them start up new businesses that will breathe new life into their area, create new jobs and improve the quality of life for local people. The scheme is also searching for enterprising and visionary individuals to become 'Village Champions' and work with the successful villages to help them achieve their ambitions of starting a successful rural business.

News

The journey of the six successful villages and their Village Champions will be documented by BBC One for a major prime time series in winter 2010.

Village SOS aims to help revive village communities, many of which are seeing rural life eroded by economic hardship and the closure of local amenities.

From this week, both rural village communities and business experts interested in becoming Village Champions can apply to the scheme. Villages need to have less than three thousand people, lots of enthusiasm and a great business idea - from retailing to manufacturing, the arts to leisure. Village Champions, who are being recruited through a nationwide search run by the BBC and Make Your Mark, part of the charity Enterprise Insight, could be anyone with a successful track record in business - banker, baker or builder - as long as they have the drive and charisma to launch a new venture.

News



Page 1 of 2 more follows.../



In November, eighteen villages will be shortlisted and offered a development grant of up to £10,000. They will also choose a Village Champion to work with to advance their ideas. In May 2010 six projects will be awarded Lottery funding of up to £400,000 and their respective Village Champions will move into the villages for a year to help them turn their business idea into a reality.

The BBC One series that is scheduled to air in Winter 2010 will follow the stories of the six new rural enterprises from start up to trading. The six-part series promises to be gripping entertainment for viewers as they follow the ups and downs as the Champion moves into the village, and the villagers start work on the business.

John Taylor, the Big Lottery Fund's Head of Region for the West Midlands, said: "While rural village life is in decline we believe that many villages are sitting on a range of untapped potential that, with the strength of the community behind them, can be turned into thriving businesses.

"Village SOS will leave a genuine legacy for each of the villages involved and ultimately, we hope, will inspire other villages, showing them what can be achieved when communities work together."

The TV series will be presented by **Sarah Willingham** (of BBC2 show *The Restaurant*) who grew famed Indian catering chain The Bombay Bicycle Club into a hugely lucrative catering business. She has also managed some of the biggest brands in the restaurant industry, from Planet Hollywood in France to Pizza Express International where she oversaw restaurant openings in 12 countries.

She said: "Village SOS is an ambitious campaign and one that I am really excited about. It will help regenerate rural villages and will hopefully be a great example to village communities across the UK to think about ways in which the enthusiasm and skills of local people and resources within their community can be turned into thriving businesses."

Alongside the series will be a major learning campaign* to help other villages use the learning and enthusiasm from the programme to start a new business that will regenerate their own communities.

Both the BIG grant application process and the BBC search for Village Champions close on 14 August 2009. Information on how to apply can be found at bbc.co.uk/villagesos

Photos and examples of community businesses across the UK are available. For more information please contact the BIG Press Office on 0207 2111 888.

Ends//

Big Lottery Fund Press Office: 020 7211 1888

Out of hours contact: 07867 500 572

BBC Wales Communications: Jenny Walford: 029 2032 2373

Village SOS public enquiries: 0844 88 88 677

Textphone: 0845 6021 659

Full details of the Big Lottery Fund programmes and grant awards are available on the website:

www.biglotteryfund.org.uk

PHOTOS AVAILABLE:

A professional origamist adds the finishing touches to a rural village made out of English, Northern Irish and Scottish pound notes made to celebrate the launch of Village SOS. The model took three days to create and was made with notes totalling more than £20,000. After being photographed, the model was dismantled and the money returned to the bank.



Notes to Editors

- Eighteen villages will be shortlisted in November to receive a development grant of up to £10,000, and will choose a 'Village Champion' to work with to advance their ideas. In May 2010 six projects will be awarded Lottery funding of up to £400,000 and their respective Village Champions will move into the villages for a year to help them turn their business idea into a reality. Village SOS aims to make six awards - three in England and one each in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.
- BBC Wales will follow the stories of the six new rural enterprises from start up to trading for a major BBC One series in Winter 2010. *Details of how other villages will be able to use the learning and enthusiasm from the programme will follow later in the year.
- The Big Lottery Fund (BIG), the largest distributor of National Lottery good cause funding, is responsible for giving out half the money raised for good causes by the National Lottery. BIG is committed to bringing real improvements to communities and the lives of people most in need and has been rolling out grants to health, education, environment and charitable causes across the UK since June 2004. The Fund was formally established by Parliament on 1 December 2006.
- Since the National Lottery began in 1994, 28p from every pound spent by the public has gone to good causes. As a result, over £23 billion has now been raised and more than 317,000 grants awarded across arts, sport, heritage, charities, health, education and the environment.
- Make Your Mark is the campaign to increase entrepreneurial behaviour in the UK - encouraging people to have ideas and make them happen. Make Your Mark is run by Enterprise Insight, a Company Ltd by Guarantee and a Registered Charity (Registered Charity number 1127187). It was founded by the four leading UK business membership organisations - the British Chambers of Commerce, the CBI, the Federation of Small Businesses and the Institute of Directors - and their Director Generals sit on its board, which is chaired by BBC Dragon Peter Jones. It is supported by the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform and endorsed by the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown. Best known for running Make Your Mark with a Tenner and Global Entrepreneurship Week (16-22 November). www.makeyourmark.org.uk Follow us on twitter @makeyourmark @hannahbourne (Head of Communications). For more information contact PR Manager Ochuko Adekoya on 020 7430 8028 ochuko@makeyourmark.org.uk