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Community Garden Grows More Than Veggies Thanks to Four Figure Funding Boost

A community garden project in Walker, Newcastle is sowing the seeds of connection and sharing produce with its local community thanks to the help of grant support from the region's largest building society.

Riverside Roots is a thriving community garden run by Newcastle-based charity, Building Futures East, providing opportunity and a safe space for over 200 members of its local community to meet, make friends and enjoy the therapeutic benefits of gardening and the environment.

The community garden is accessed by a wide variety of local groups including vulnerable individuals, people suffering from social isolation, and those with barriers to work or with debt and/or housing security issues.

Local groups who use the garden help tend to a wide variety of fruits and vegetables including tomatoes, potatoes, beetroot, courgettes, onion, garlic, radish and spring onions. The food grown at Riverside Roots is then distributed back into the community via the local groups who use the garden, and the Building Futures East food bank on-site in Walker, serving up to 40 families with food parcels each week.

To ensure the future of the community garden, a £4,450 grant from the Newcastle Building Society Community Fund at the Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland is helping to fund the salary of a senior community engagement officer at Building Futures East. The grant will also contribute to the maintenance of the garden and purchase of equipment to support the sustainability project.

Dawn Emmerson, senior community engagement officer at Building Futures East, said: "Our community garden has gone from strength-to-strength and is now accessible to individuals from across Newcastle and North Tyneside. Our aim is to expand our growing space to enable us to provide fresh produce that goes into our emergency food parcels for residents of Walker and Byker.

“There is a real mix of groups who work on the community garden, all who get to benefit from the improved access to nature, as well as its positive impacts on mental and physical health.

“The community grant from Newcastle Building Society will mean that I am able to continue to run the project on behalf of Building Futures East, and extend the reach of its impact which is already benefitting the lives of hundreds of people in the Newcastle and North Tyneside areas.”

As part of the garden’s future development, a double-decker bus is being transformed into an extension of the community garden’s growing area with local artists helping to paint the bus, and fruit and vegetable planters being installed. Once the bus is completed it will be available for all local people to enjoy.

Sean Rainbow, community assistant at Newcastle Building Society who recently visited the charity, said: “Riverside Roots is a fantastic project providing opportunities for vulnerable or disadvantaged members of our community to develop a deeper connection with nature, and reap the rewards of their efforts through the healthy foods they grow. We’re proud to be able to support Building Futures East and look forward to watching Riverside Roots continue to grow.”

The Newcastle Building Society Community Fund at the Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland offers grants to charities and community groups located in or around the communities served by the Society's branch network.

Since its launch in 2016, Newcastle Building Society’s Community Fund at the Community Foundation has also contributed over £1.7m in grants and partnerships to a wide variety of charities and projects across the region, including the Sir Bobby Robson Foundation and the Prince’s Trust.

The grants are so far estimated to have had a positive impact on more than 151,000 people.

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About Newcastle Building Society

Newcastle Building Society is the biggest building society in the North East, with a network of 31 branches and assets of more than £6.2bn. We've been here for our members for over 160 years.

As a leading local employer, we're committed to growing our region's talent and being a great place to work where people can realise their potential. We hold Platinum IIP and won the Excellence and Positive Impact Award at the 2022 CIPD North East of England HR&D Awards.

We have been named Regional Building Society of the Year for seven consecutive years from 2017 – 2023 by What Mortgage? and also won Best Overall Personal Finance Brand at the Personal Finance Awards 2023/24. In 2024 Newcastle Building Society became the first UK business to receive international accreditation for mutual value measurement, recognising our ongoing commitment to creating value for its members and communities.

We help people to own their home, to save and to plan their finances through our range of products and services. We believe in the role of the high street at the heart of our communities and, as our branch network grows, we are increasingly proactive in making financial information and financial advice accessible across our regions.

Financial Advice is provided through our Newcastle Financial Advisers Limited subsidiary. Face-to-face financial advice is available at each of the Society's 31 branches plus a financial advice-only location in Pickering, North Yorkshire. For the third year running, Newcastle Financial Advisers has been awarded Top Rated Firm status by VouchedFor - the UK's leading review site for Financial Advisers.

We're dedicated to helping our communities make positive changes; since 2016 the financial support through grants and donations from the Newcastle Building Society Community Fund at the Community Foundation to benefit local causes has surpassed £1.7m. Our total community contributions in 2022, made up of grants, match funding, and our ongoing partnership donations, was more than £544,000.

Newcastle Building Society is committed to creating a culture of belonging, where people can bring their whole self to work and be respected and valued for who they are. Our colleague-run networks include the Race Network, LGBTQ+ Network the Disability and Awareness

Network, Women in Leadership Network, Menopause Network and Parent and Carers Network, all of which help steer Diversity, Equity and Inclusion policy within the organisation.

www.newcastle.co.uk

Newcastle Building Society Principal Office: 1 Cobalt Park Way, Cobalt Business Park, NE28 9EJ.

Newcastle Building Society is authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority.

Newcastle Building Society is entered in the Financial Services Register under number 156058. You can check this on the Financial Services Register or by contacting the Financial Conduct Authority on 0800 111 6768.

Newcastle Building Society introduces to Newcastle Financial Advisers Limited for advice on investments, pensions, life and protection insurance, and inheritance tax planning. Aspects of inheritance tax planning are not regulated by the Prudential Regulation Authority nor the Financial Conduct Authority. Newcastle Financial Advisers is a trade name of Newcastle Financial Advisers Limited which is an appointed representative of The Openwork Partnership a trading style of Openwork Limited which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

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