

Community businesses offer a radically more inclusive and democratic way to run local economies, experts said today

New report by Forum for the Future sets out roadmap to realise sector's untapped potential by 2030.

London, 14 November 2018 – A new report by one of the world's leading sustainability non-profits, [Forum for the Future](#), has uncovered the enormous potential community businesses have in making local economies both more inclusive and democratic.

Drawing on the views and experiences of more than 40 community businesses and 20 experts, [Community Business in 2030](#) illustrates the transformative effect the sector could have on both local people's lives and society as a whole.

To turn the vision into a reality, however, the researchers say eight big shifts are needed – including building a collective sense of purpose. The report suggests a series of priority actions for a range of actors in the system – from community businesses and infrastructure organisations, to government and citizens.

The report, commissioned by charitable trust [Power to Change](#), envisions that by the end of the next decade, community businesses will have proven that there's a radically more inclusive, democratic way to run local economies – owning assets, sharing power, and putting people first. As a well-established part of the UK economy, they will have transformed lives, while contributing to bigger shifts in society – redefining meaningful work, regenerating the natural world, and enabling people to impact global issues, locally.

Vidhya Alakeson, CEO of Power to Change, said: “With the challenges facing the country over the next decade, there is an urgent need to find a better way to support local communities. This inquiry tells us that community businesses feel excited for their future, and believe they are part of a different, more inclusive approach to running local economies.”

The report highlights community businesses that are already leading the way, including [HCT Group](#), a transport social enterprise which sets up new local accountability structures whenever it starts operating in a new area, reinvesting profits back into the community. Another example is [Sacred Earth](#), a community-owned land project that's reclaiming and nurturing a 40-acre site of an abandoned brickworks in East Sussex. The organisation produces and sells biochar, a charcoal made from agricultural waste that sequesters carbon and enhances soil.

Other community business making a significant difference include [BS3 Community Development](#), Bristol, which offers Ofsted-outstanding childcare, dementia support for the elderly, social day clubs and Qui Gong classes. Or the [Goodwin Development Trust](#) in Hull, whose 200-strong workforce supports young and disadvantaged people to find work, provides affordable housing and care, and distributes surplus food to those in need.

Simon Lee, Principal Strategist at Forum for the Future, said that despite all the promise of community business, to fulfil its potential would necessitate a series of significant changes – or “big shifts” – to take place.

“This requires action from a range of actors, from community businesses themselves to central and local government, as well as citizens and mainstream businesses,” he added.

Among these necessary big shifts is the need to build a collective sense of purpose for the movement, strengthened and mobilised through deep peer-to-peer networks. Local community business assemblies could, the report says, form to co-ordinate efforts, while closer relationships with other players in the social economy, at different geographical scales, would help nurture a supportive environment.

Another required change is a shift in underlying economic, social and cultural norms – with people becoming more engaged in their communities, more opportunities for citizen participation, and changes in economic policy to incentivise the protection and enhancement of human, social and natural capital.

Ed Mayo, Secretary General of [Co-operatives UK](#), which took part in the visioning project, said: “A map of our future economy without community business on it is not a map worth having. It is high time that the remarkable contribution of community business was recognised, and this work, building on our own National Co-operative Development Strategy, helps to do just that.”

The full report is available at <https://www.powertochange.org.uk/research/community-business-2030>.

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To arrange an interview or for any other media enquiries, please contact Simon Lee on 020 7324 3667 or via email at s.lee@forumforthefuture.org.

NOTES TO EDITORS

About Forum for the Future

Forum for the Future is one of the world’s leading sustainability non-profits. For over 20 years we’ve been working in partnership with business, governments and civil society to accelerate the shift toward a sustainable future.

We specialise in addressing critical global challenges by catalysing change in key systems, from food to apparel, energy to shipping. We do this by convening transformational collaborations to drive change, by partnering with organisations to help them lead by example, and by building a global community of pioneers and change makers.

Together we are reinventing the way the world works. Find out more at www.forumforthefuture.org or by following [@Forum4theFuture](https://twitter.com/Forum4theFuture) on Twitter.

About Power to Change

Power to Change is the independent trust that supports community businesses in England.

Community businesses are locally rooted, community-led, trading for community benefit and making life better for local people. There are nearly 7,000 community businesses across England employing 35,500 people, with a combined income of £1.2bn.

From pubs to libraries; shops to bakeries; swimming pools to solar farms; community businesses are creating great products and services, providing employment and training and transforming lives.

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