



Dear All,

It's such a joy to share what's happening right now. From Grimsby, where people are working together in a way that could set an example for the whole country, to Rochdale, where local energy continues to grow - there's real hope, commitment and inspiration to celebrate.

In this update, you'll find:

- Your invitation to Open House in March - a chance to join people building a thriving future in their hometowns across the country
- Welcome to two brilliant new team members, Angela and Ben
- Updates from Grimsby Together and the emerging Grimsby Fund
- Stories of connection from Rochdale's Let's Talk series
- Key dates for your diaries

This year promises to be transformative. We're just six weeks away from Open House in March - a two-day opportunity for people from every sector to contribute to and celebrate the change underway in North East Lincolnshire and across the country. We would love for you to join us - your invitation and more information are below.

Please do read on to hear about citizen-led projects emerging across the UK, alongside stories of people creating real and lasting change in their communities. We're in the thick of bringing the next phase of this work to life. We can only do that together.

We are so thankful for your support, partnership and collaboration over the last year and look forward to continuing to drive this change together in 2026.

Emily Bolton  
CEO, Our Future

## Welcoming Angela and Ben to Our Future

We're delighted to welcome two brilliant people to Our Future, bringing lots of experience, fresh energy and a shared commitment to community-led change.

**Angela Francis** joins as Our Future Head of Scaling, bringing 15 years of experience in social innovation, programme and funding design, as well as building approaches that create lasting impact.

Angela has worked across the humanitarian, international development and social impact sectors, championing participatory grant-making, shifting power to communities, and building the relationships and infrastructure needed for sustainable change. She is passionate about collaborative working and creating the conditions for communities to lead their own change.

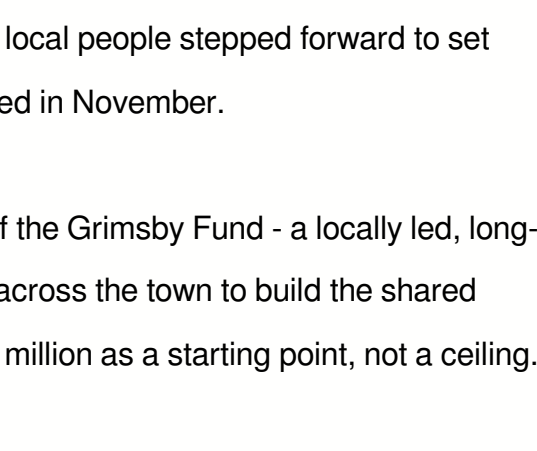
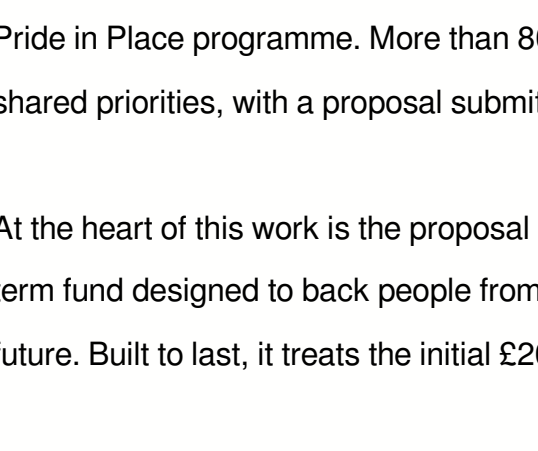
### Meet Angela

**Ben Robinson** joins as Place Lead, supporting communities across the North of England, with a particular focus on Rochdale. Ben has spent the last four years at the Centre for Social Justice, working directly with grassroots organisations to amplify their voices, direct funding effectively and tackling social challenges at their root.

Previously a teacher, Ben brings both frontline and systems-level insight into the communities he supports. He also volunteers as a trustee at Clean Slate Solutions, helping ex-offenders access stable employment. Ben is excited to use his experience and skills to facilitate meaningful change and connect with people and organisations across the North.

### Meet Ben

We're so pleased to have Angela and Ben on the journey with us, please join us in giving them a warm welcome.



## Grimsby Together - Building Infrastructure for Change

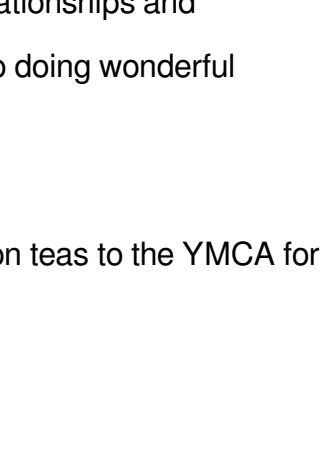
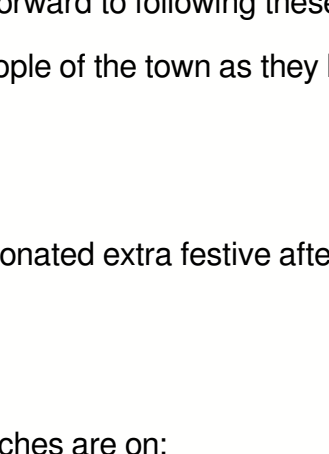
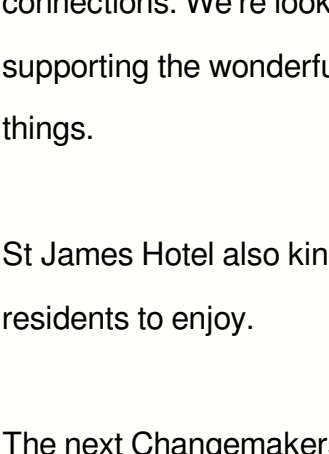
People across Grimsby are coming together to shape a shared future for the town - showing what's possible when communities lead with energy, care and creativity.

In 2025, Grimsby became eligible for up to £20 million through the Government's Pride in Place programme. More than 80 local people stepped forward to set shared priorities, with a proposal submitted in November.

At the heart of this work is the proposal of the Grimsby Fund - a locally led, long-term fund designed to back people from across the town to build the shared future. Built to last, it treats the initial £20 million as a starting point, not a ceiling.

There will be a pilot of this fund during 2026 so that we can keep up momentum and test this new model of citizen-led change. Alongside this we will be building the fund. However, Grimsby Together is about so much more than money. It's about a town coming together - people showing up, collaborating and building something they can be proud of. It's a model other places across the country can learn from.

### Find Out More About Grimsby Together



## Connections and Conversations

Thanks to the support of The St James Hotel, Jose and Crystal hosted a festive lunch just before Christmas for some of the town's fabulous Changemakers. It was wonderful to see new faces and catch up with familiar friends as stories of success, positivity and connection were shared.

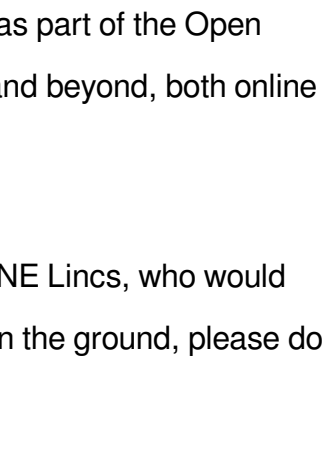
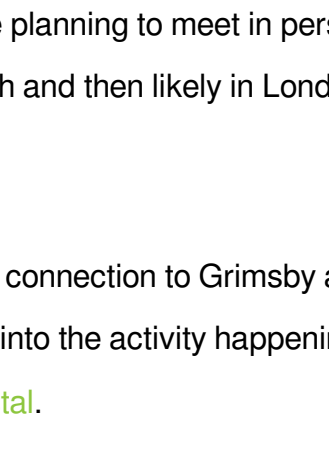
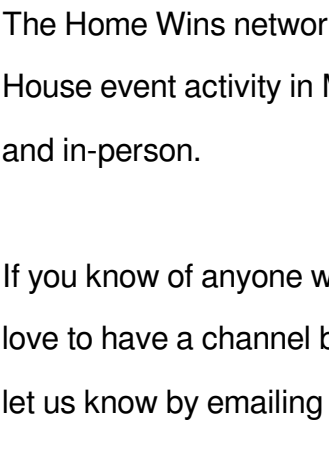
The warmth in the room was something special, as people made new connections. We're looking forward to following these relationships and supporting the wonderful people of the town as they keep doing wonderful things.

St James Hotel also kindly donated extra festive afternoon teas to the YMCA for residents to enjoy.

The next Changemakers lunches are on:

- Wednesday 11th March 2026: 12:30 - 2:30pm
- Tuesday 9th June 2026: 12:30 - 2:30pm

If you are interested in joining, please email [Jose](#).



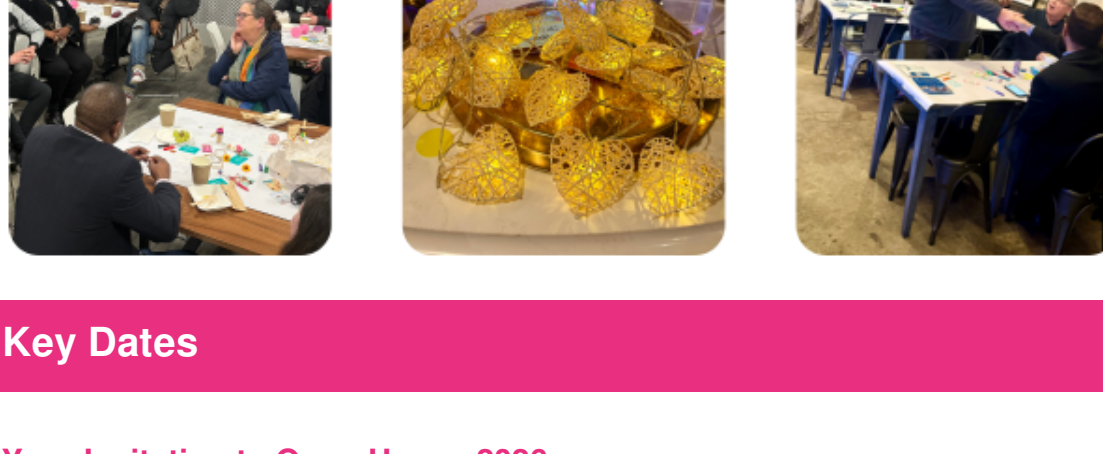
## Home Wins - a network united by love for Grimsby and North East Lincolnshire

The Home Wins network squeezed in an online meet just before the festive break. The group joins from across the country and even has some international members. During the pre-Christmas meetup there were discussions around a shared love and enthusiasm for all things Grimsby and NE Lincs.

Members shared stories of childhood memories growing up in the area, first career steps and how it feels to return. The improvements they're seeing and the stark contrasts between visits as Grimsby changes and evolves. They also looked at one of the great success stories, the Horizon Youth Zone.

The Home Wins network are planning to meet in person as part of the Open House event activity in March and then likely in London and beyond, both online and in-person.

If you know of anyone with a connection to Grimsby and NE Lincs, who would love to have a channel back into the activity happening on the ground, please do let us know by emailing [Crystal](#).



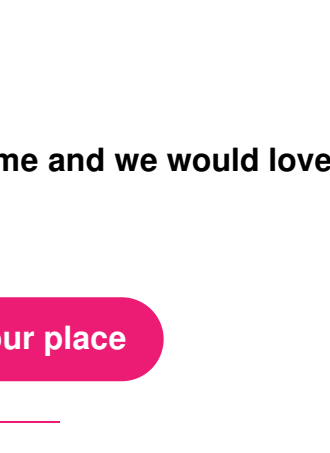
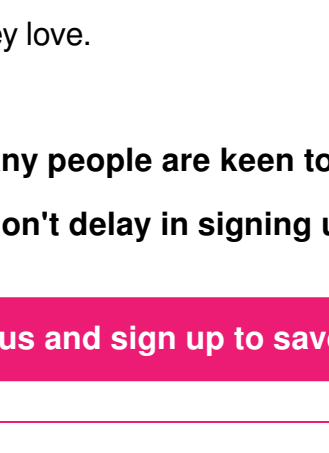
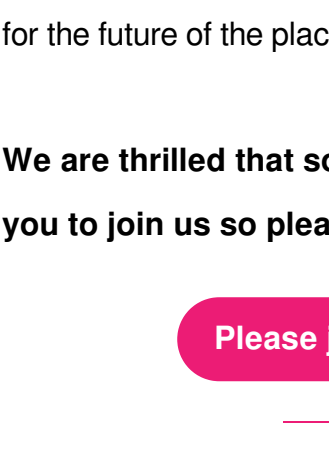
## Let's Talk Series

Jet and the team in Rochdale have launched the Let's Talk series of conversations, giving people a space to come together, share challenges, ideas and what matters most in their communities. The first conversations focused on Our Kids and Our Health. It's been so wonderful to see people opening up, listening to each other and exploring ways together that could make life better across the borough of Rochdale.

### Reconnect with others who have a passion for Rochdale

If you have ties to Rochdale but no longer live there and want to be part of bringing change to the community you care about - please get in touch. We would love to hear from you. If you have friends, family, old school mates or colleagues who may be interested, please share this with them.

### Get in touch



## Key Dates

### Your Invitation to Open House 2026

9th March - 10th March 2026

Join people who are building a thriving future in Grimsby, their hometowns and across the country.

### Across the two days, you will:

- Contribute to and learn from the work underway in Grimsby and NE Lincs
- Take part in practical conversations and share your experience
- Be inspired by great people leading work in NE Lincs and elsewhere
- Explore the principles that underpin the Our Future model and how they could be applied in different places
- Meet new collaborators and build relationships that will continue beyond Open House
- Have a chance to hear fresh thinking to apply in your own work and community

Open House is designed to leave you with practical ideas, new collaborators and renewed belief in what's possible when people come together with big ambition for the future of the place they love.

**We are thrilled that so many people are keen to come and we would love you to join us so please don't delay in signing up.**

Please join us and sign up to save your place

### Home Wins Network - Grimsby and North East Lincolnshire

Have you, or someone you know, moved away from Grimsby and North East Lincs but still thinks of it as home? Whether you moved away for work, study, or a new adventure, Home Wins is the network for anyone who wants to stay connected and turn that pride into real impact.

- Thursday 19th March 2026

- Thursday 4th June 2026

For more information or to sign-up to Home Wins, please email [Crystal](#).

### Grimsby & NE Lincs Changemakers Quarterly Meet-Ups

We'd love for you to join us at our next Quarterly Changemakers Meet Up - a way of bringing together the incredible people in the town.

The Changemakers Meet-ups are about creating space for people who care about the town to connect, share and support each other over a bite to eat!

You will be able to build meaningful connections with people in the area, discover the inspiring initiatives happening across North East Lincs and share experiences and learn from each other's journey.

- Wednesday 11th March 2026: 12:30 - 2:30pm

- Tuesday 9th June 2026: 12:30 - 2:30pm

If you are interested in joining, please email [Jose](#).

Thank you for being part of this. Whether you're leading locally or connecting from afar it is only by doing this together that we are making progress. We hope to see you in March and to keep building together throughout the year.

Onwards,

Emily.



Our Future, <https://www.our-future.io/>, 1st Floor, 88 Baker St, London, England

W1U 6TQ, UK

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