Press Release: Derby UrbanFood Living Lab

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Derby chosen as the UK's only Living Lab in major European food and nature project

Down to Earth Derby will lead Derby's UrbanFood Living Lab from Electric Daisy, putting the city on the European stage in a €6 million Horizon Europe project



Electric Daisy on Bold Lane, Derby city centre, home of Derby's UrbanFood Living Lab. Credit: Down to Earth Derby.

Derby, 21 October 2026. Derby has been chosen as the only UK Living Lab in UrbanFood, a major European research and innovation project exploring how cities can build healthier, fairer and more climate friendly food systems with citizens at their heart. Down to Earth

Derby CIC (DtE) will lead the city's Living Lab from Electric Daisy on Bold Lane, the award winning urban nature garden it created in the heart of the city centre.

The selection places Derby alongside cities across Europe as a testing ground for new ideas in urban food, nature and community, and is international recognition of the nature based regeneration model DtE has built in the city.

A European project with Derby at its heart

Coordinated by the Centre for Research and Technology Hellas (CERTH) and funded through Horizon Europe, UrbanFood brings together 18 partners from eight countries over 42 months, from September 2026 to February 2030. The project launched at the Agricultural University of Athens on 15 and 16 September, where partners set out plans for practical food growing, training and knowledge sharing, citizen participation, social innovation and digital tools that connect people with local food initiatives.



UrbanFood partners from eight countries at the project launch, Agricultural University of Athens, September 2026.

Each Living Lab is a real world space where communities, researchers and organisations come together to design, test and improve new solutions. Derby's findings will be shared with partner cities across Europe, and the best ideas from those cities will be brought back to Derby.

What the Living Lab will do

Working alongside the University of Derby, DtE's Living Lab will be rooted at Electric Daisy and reach right across the city through satellite hubs with community partners. It will focus on knowledge exchange and social innovation: helping people gain the skills,

confidence and connections to grow, cook and share food, and testing new community led approaches built to last long beyond the project. Food growing systems and digital tools will support that work.

The Living Lab will work with people in or close to food poverty, young people through education partnerships, university students and the wider public.



Live music and community activity at Electric Daisy, which will host Living Lab workshops and food growing from 2027. Credit: Down to Earth Derby.

Built on proof

Derby was chosen because it is not starting from scratch. Since opening in June 2023, Electric Daisy has welcomed more than 40,000 visitors a year, hosted more than 300 events and was Highly Commended for Regeneration Project of the Year at the East Midlands Property Awards 2026. DtE already reaches close to 1,500 people through hands on, community led programmes, working with partners including Derby Food for Thought Alliance, the Sustainable Food Partnership, Derby Nature Collective, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Derby County Community Trust and the YMCA.


DOWN TO EARTH
D E R B Y
Reimagining our city.

Visitors at Electric Daisy on Bold Lane, with Derby Cathedral behind. Credit: Down to Earth Derby.

A permanent home for nature based regeneration

UrbanFood is a major step towards DtE's ambition to make Electric Daisy a permanent home for nature based regeneration in Derby. DtE is developing plans for Electric Daisy Phase II, an expansion that would create year round indoor space for learning, food, culture and community, giving work like the Living Lab a lasting base at the heart of the city centre and putting Derby at the forefront of nature led city regeneration in the UK and beyond.


Down to Earth Derby (DtE) | UK
Who We Are - Environment
CO-CREATING EUROPE'S URBAN FOOD FUTURE
KEY INNOVATION PILLARS
Knowledge Exchange & Food Education Programmes
4 Innovative Urban Food Production Systems
Citizens Co-Creation
TOGETHER, WE ARE SHAPING THE CITIES OF TOMORROW

Jamie Quince-Starkey, Founder and Director of Down to Earth Derby, presenting Derby's Living Lab at the UrbanFood launch in Athens. Credit: Down to Earth Derby.

Jamie Quince-Starkey, Founder and Director of Down to Earth Derby, said:

"Being the only UK Living Lab in a European project of this scale is a huge moment for Derby. It tells us that what we've built at Electric Daisy is being recognised as a model other cities want to learn from. Through UrbanFood, people across Derby will help shape the future of how cities grow and share food, and we'll bring the best ideas from across Europe home.

"Food is one of the simplest ways to bring people together and reconnect them with nature. This is about people getting their hands in the soil, learning from each other and building something that lasts. Our ambition is to give that work a permanent home and make Derby the home of nature based regeneration. Phase II is how we get there, and we want everyone who believes in this city to come with us. Life is good when we grow it together."

Get involved

Over the coming months, DtE will invite people across Derby to help shape the Living Lab through a short survey, conversations and workshops at Electric Daisy, before growing, learning and community food activity gets underway in 2027.

Anyone who would like to get involved in the Living Lab can contact Sorcha McCay, UrbanFood Project Assistant, at sorcha@dtederby.org. Partners and investors who share DtE's ambition for Electric Daisy Phase II can contact Jamie Quince-Starkey at jamieqs@dtederby.org.

ENDS

Notes to editors

About Down to Earth Derby. Down to Earth Derby CIC is about community, culture and connection to nature. It regenerates the places we live through nature based projects and programmes, starting in Derby and made to scale. Its flagship site, Electric Daisy at 1 to 4 Bold Lane, opened in June 2023 as an urban nature garden and events space, welcoming more than 40,000 visitors a year and hosting more than 300 events. Electric Daisy was Highly Commended for Regeneration Project of the Year at the East Midlands Property Awards 2026.

About UrbanFood. UrbanFood (Sustainable Urban Food Living Labs) is a Horizon Europe research and innovation project, Grant Agreement No. 101289068, coordinated by CERTH, Greece. It runs from 1 September 2026 to 28 February 2030, with a budget of €6 million and 18 partners across eight countries. Derby is the project's only UK Living Lab. More at urbanfood-project.eu

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Images. High resolution versions of all five images in this release are available on request. All images credit: Down to Earth Derby.



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