



Press Release 9th Oct 2020

Founder of Bridge Community Farms made an MBE in Queen's birthday honours

The founder of Bridge Community Farms has been made an MBE in the Queen's birthday honours.

Francis Ball has been recognised for his services to the community in Ellesmere Port during Covid-19.

The list, which also honours medical staff, key workers and volunteers responding to the pandemic, was due to have been announced on the Queen's official birthday in June. It was delayed because of the coronavirus and will now be published on Saturday.

Francis established Bridge Community Farms CIC in Ellesmere Port in 2015. The 10-acre farm grows vegetables, salad and fruit using organic methods and sells organically grown delivered vegetable boxes throughout the Wirral and West Cheshire.

The charity also provides support and a therapeutic environment for those with mental health and life-long learning difficulties as well as work experience for young people and the long-term unemployed.

The charity launched a dedicated service to help vulnerable and elderly people during the pandemic so they could continue to receive vital provisions.

They recruited 30 extra volunteers including drivers to help with the distribution of their popular weekly vegetable boxes after a fourfold increase in enquiries from older people confined to home and worried about getting fresh food.

A Bridge Buddy Club was launched to help vulnerable customers who were feeling isolated, lonely or anxious at home. A Bridge Buddy would call them for a chat as often as they liked.

They also produced nearly 10,000 free meals for struggling families during the school holidays, delivered to their home by Chester charity Passion-for-Learning.

Staff also worked hard to maintain the farm's growing spaces and tend to plants and crops to meet the demand of the vegetable boxes.

Francis said: " I am greatly humbled to receive this honour, knowing how many "Bridge Community Farms" and "Bridge Community Wellness Gardens" colleagues, both volunteers and paid staff, have worked so hard through the pandemic to bring fresh food and some comfort and support to so many people across The Wirral, Chester and West Cheshire.

"We love what we do and we love the responses from our thousands of Veg Box customers, Wellness clients, volunteers and supporters. And we are deeply grateful to our major funders, The Steve Morgan Foundation, Cheshire Community Foundation, Stanlaw Abbey Development Trust, Cheshire Freemasons, The Earl of Chester Fund, The Ursula Keyes Trust and many others for making our work possible."