



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: 11th August 2022

Short film highlighting the impact of rural domestic abuse to screen at Ritz Cinema Belper

An award-nominated short film spotlighting the impact of domestic abuse in rural areas will have a special screening at the Ritz Cinema in Belper this September.

Created by Matlock-based charity Rural Action Derbyshire, in partnership with Rural Media and with funding from Derbyshire's Police & Crime Commissioner, *The Willows* tells the story of Dawn, who is forced to live under the coercive and controlling behaviour of her husband.

A showing of the film will be followed by a Q&A where audience members and press delegates can ask questions to a number of esteemed guests, with Beverley Parker, CEO of Rural Action Derbyshire, introducing the panel and hosting the session.

For this, Commissioner Angelique Foster, Derbyshire Police and Crime Commissioner, will be joined by:

- Alex, Rural abuse survivor
- Darren De'ath, Derbyshire Detective Superintendent
- Jennifer Calverley, Chief Executive Officer at The Elm Foundation
- Judith Vickress, Manager at Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance

We will also be welcoming Mrs Elizabeth Fothergill CBE, Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Derbyshire, to the Ritz. Emphasising the importance of this one-of-a-kind event.

While a scripted film, *The Willows* shines a light on the reality for many living in rural areas, where isolation and poorer access to support services can lead to a higher risk of harm.

The powerful short received six nominations at the 2021 Royal Television Society Midlands Awards and has been watched over 13,000 times on YouTube, yet its full impact can only truly be felt on the big screen.

Emily Brailsford, Project Officer for Rural Action Derbyshire's domestic abuse awareness service The Willow Project, said: "Domestic abuse in rural areas lasts, on average, 25% longer

than in urban areas - mainly due difficulty of accessing support services. *The Willows* aims to highlight the challenges that many in rural areas face every day.

“We are delighted that so many high-profile guests will be joining us in Belper, and we are looking forward to showcasing this powerful film on the big screen. We hope that it will help us to continue challenging attitudes and changing lives.”

Police and Crime Commissioner Angelique Foster said: “Tackling Domestic Violence in every form is one of the key priorities in my Police and Crime Plan for Derbyshire. Those living in rural communities often face a different set of problems, including isolation. It is important to educate people to recognise the signs of violence and abuse, wherever and however it is taking place. This is why I am supporting this unique film which focuses on the problems faced by those in rural areas.”

This event will take place at **1.30pm on Friday 16th September**, with the film beginning at 2pm and the Q&A panel taking place directly afterwards.

The showing is free to attend for members of the press and public. However, **tickets must be booked in advance** and will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis.

ENDS -

For further information please contact Skye Peat, Events & Marketing Executive at RAD by email on s.peat@ruralactionderbyshire.org.uk or telephone on 01629 592970 / 07540 736118.

NOTES TO EDITOR

[Rural Action Derbyshire](#) (RAD), formerly Derbyshire Rural Community Council, is an independent organisation and registered charity operating across the county since 1924. RAD aims to improve the life of those living and working in rural Derbyshire, by providing direct services to help people and groups in rural communities, and by raising awareness of the issues faced by rural communities. For more information, go to the RAD website. RAD is a network member of ACRE.

[The Willow Project](#) is operated by Rural Action Derbyshire, and aims to spotlight the challenges faced by victims of domestic abuse who live in the countryside, which can be quite different to those living in towns or cities. This is predominantly achieved through the delivery of awareness training throughout Derbyshire, which helps people identify the signs of domestic abuse, give them the confidence to report it and also to challenge attitudes that perpetuate domestic abuse, particularly in rural areas.

[Rural Media](#) is a charity and production house using film, media and digital art to strengthen communities, nurture creative talent and influence social change. For its work on *The Willows*, the company received six nominations at the 2021 Royal Television Society Midlands Awards - including for writer Simon Evans and actor Vanessa Hehir.

[Derbyshire's Police and Crime Commissioner](#) funded The Willow Project in February 2020, to raise awareness around the different challenges faced by victims of domestic abuse in rural areas.