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Ground-breaking community café wins annual NFA #noplacelikehome photography competition

“We all know that building a home is not as simple as just putting a roof over someone’s head. A sense of community and support helps people create a sense of home and a new life for themselves,” said Sacred Bean Café founder Darren Howie when he submitted his entry for the 2020 NFA photography competition.

It’s a sentiment that captured the admiration of voters who overwhelmingly chose a simple image of the Sacred Bean social enterprise group enjoying a cuppa as their favourite from the ten-strong shortlist.

Maria Murphy, Managing Director of Derby Homes, said: “I’m so pleased that our photo got this recognition and won this year’s trophy. It’s such a simple scene, but represents so much more and is a great reflection of the huge range of local organisations and community groups ALMOs get involved with.”

Sacred Bean is a specialist coffee social enterprise established by and for people who are overcoming life-controlling issues. Volunteers work to leave behind addiction, criminality and homelessness through their work to ethically source, roast, brew and sell artisan coffee.

Founder Reverend Darren Howie has worked with Derby Homes in his role as a local chaplain for some years and has always been very open about his own recovery from heroin addiction and the life of crime it led him into.

Building on his own experiences, and using his links with organisations that support people recovering from addiction or leaving the prison system, he works to help Sacred Bean volunteers develop a sense of purpose and belonging.

After receiving the trophy – via the magic of lockdown-compliant social media – a thrilled Darren thanked the voters who had supported the Sacred Bean group.

“The photo really captures how we view community in Derby city centre, based on a sense of belonging and connectedness. To give someone a home is not just to give them a house, it’s to give them belonging, a space of safety, welcome and hospitality - and that’s what this picture represents.”

Runners-up

Yes Manchester’s partnership with ALMO Northwards Housing took second place with a picture of tenant Althea Barnett toasting Yes CEO Gill Cook at Southchurch Parade, once a row of derelict shops due for demolition. Now it’s where Althea’s ‘Upcycle Collyhurst’ business is based, not only selling refurbished goods but also running classes to teach local people how to do their own upcycling.

The success of Southchurch Parade speaks volumes about how ALMO housing management is so much more than bricks and mortar,” says Northwards’ Mark Hesford. “This picture says it all - entrepreneurial tenants, empowered by ALMO investment and innovation, living in energy-efficient homes amongst a vibrant, proud community.”

In third place, a heart-warming picture of Wolverhampton Homes tenant Mrs Austin – Sarah, but everyone calls her Mrs Austin – captivated voters. She has lived in the same home in Eastfield for 45 years. After a lifetime serving her community, the retired nurse is recognised everywhere she goes. Mrs Austin is, quite simply, famous in her world. “I regularly see familiar faces when I’m out and about and some give me a big hug!” she says.

There really is no place like home.

Our competition brochure, featuring the ten shortlisted images of the 2020 competition and the stories behind them, is available at www.almos.org.uk.

Many of this year’s entries will take pride of place in this year’s NFA Annual Review, due to be published tomorrow, 1 May 2020.

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Note to editors: The National Federation of ALMOs Ltd (NFA) represents England’s 30 arms-length management organisations (ALMOs). ALMOs are not-for-profit council-owned housing companies that **manage nearly 413,000 council homes across 30 local authorities.**

First established in 2002 as part of the Government’s Decent Homes programme, ALMO companies now work with their parent councils to deliver diverse housing services. These range from new-build development to support for residents’ employability, financial resilience and health and well-being.

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